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THE SOCIALIST RESPONSE TO THE WOMAN QUESTION: ATTITUDES OF THE AMERICAN LEFT DURING THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

by

© KATHLEEN WILDASIN JONES

A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Socialist Response to the Woman Question: Attitudes of the American Left During the Progressive Era" submitted by Kathleen Wildasin Jones in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed an increase in social awareness among large sections of the American population. Social reformers sought changes in many areas to alleviate the worst inequities of the new industrial order. Although many of the attempts testified to individual concern (notably the settlement house movement), the political arena often became the focus of the reformers' zeal. In 1901 a new political party, the Socialist Party of America, emerged as the national expression of one group of Americans disillusioned with the economic and social results of industrialization. Historians have persisted in defining the Socialist Party as a radical political institution, which, if successful, would have refashioned the character of American society. However, the party's inability to respond constructively to the demands for woman's rights suggests that the radicalism of the American socialist movement in the Progressive era is somewhat illusory.

Throughout the Progressive era American women rallied behind a variety of issues designed to improve the status of the female sex. Although unnoticed by many of the women, a new feminine image seemed to be the ultimate goal of their campaign. The woman movement did not form a group defined by class lines; its boundaries cut across economic status, encompassing a group designated by physical characteristics. To enroll the crusaders for woman's rights as part of the socialist movement, it was necessary for the American Socialist Party to redefine socialism to express its appeal in terms of a coalition of social groups with virtually no power within the

existing political framework.

For a variety of reasons, American socialism proved incapable of making the transition from a static force appealing to a particular class interest, to a more viable radical coalition. In its attempts to respond to the "woman question" the party was hindered by its belief in the traditional image of woman as wife and mother. Although theoretically socialism offered women a path to equality, the American party could promise equality only in the future, after the establishment of the socialist state.

The socialists did try to entice women into their party, through a program initiated by their women members. The Woman's National Committee became the agency within the party to coordinate the appeal to women. One of the most important functions of the woman's committee was to direct a socialist campaign for woman suffrage. However, by 1915 the Socialist Party membership had repudiated both actions. The fate of the woman's committee and the socialist suffrage campaign were inextricably tied to the party's view of women, and its definition of the limits of socialism. Through an analyis of the socialist response to the woman question it becomes apparent that the party perceived its role in a very narrow fashion, limiting its appeal solely to an economic class. The conservative image of woman belies the historiographical description of the party's radicalism.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction:

"Socialism, Feminism and Suffragism, the Terrible Triplets"*

"All men are created equal," American revolutionaries announced in the Declaration of Independence. The subsequent history of American reform movements has reaffirmed the sentiment expressed in this statement, as groups of concerned individuals have tried to obliterate distinctions based on race, nationality or sex. The meaning of "equality" has also been expanded since the time of the Revolution. From an initial concern with equal political rights, emphasis has shifted to a demand for equal economic opportunity and equality of social roles. American society has experienced several periods of social upheaval in which the inequities of life were subject to close scrutiny, the Progressive era from the turn of the century to the First World War being one such age of reform.

By 1900 the United States was emerging as a highly industrialized nation. Much of the population was still engaged in agriculture, but industry had begun to assume an increasingly important role in the economy. Changes in social attitudes seemed to accompany the industrial expansion. The petulant social critic, Henry Adams,, in his estrangement from the new values of American life, reported that the "Dynamo" had become the country's "symbol of infinity". The force of the machine, Adams felt, was worshipped in the twentieth century just as the force of the Virgin had been worshipped in the Middle Ages.[1] To Adams the machine and the factory were expressions of social chaos, and like a number of Americans he was overawed by the newly industrialized world. In solitude Adams struggled with modernity only to admit defeat, but others were not so easily dissuaded.

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*With apologies to Richard Hubbard, whose book by the same title (Chicago, 1915) was a defense of "labor and the duties of motherhood," (p. 2).

The expansion of American industry was followed closely by public attempts to limit or control its effects. The Populist Party in the 1890's had expressed the protests of the farmers, while the Progressive movement after the turn of the century voiced the discontent of middle-class urbanites. However, the goals of populism and progressivism failed to satisfy all Americans who disliked the new world of big business.

Some Americans turned for a diagnosis of society's ills to the Marxian terminology of increasing class polarization caused by private ownership of the means of production. Combining socialist theory with American democratic rhetoric, they wanted to restore equal opportunity to each individual through a reordering of the economic structure of society. To achieve their goal, many of the radicals united behind a new political organization formed in 1901 - the Socialist Party of America. For two decades this political party was the focus of the crusade to refashion American life.

The roots of American socialism can be traced to the communitarian movements of the early 1800's when followers of Robert Owen and Charles Fourier planted utopian socialist colonies on the

American frontier.[2] However, the direct impetus for a scientific socialist movement based on political action and economic organization came largely from German immigrants, who, fleeing to the United States in the mid-1800's, brought a socialist heritage with them to the new world. Throughout the nineteenth century, American socialism remained a movement of immigrant "mechanics" who looked longingly at developments in Europe, or utopian dreamers intent on physically removing themselves from the corruption of contemporary society. After the Civil War, American socialists joined the worldwide movement by forming local affiliates of the International Workingmen's Association (IWA). Although IWA branches in the United States were supported mainly by immigrants, some interest was shown by native Americans. By 1870 native radicals controlled at least two of these branches, labelled Sections 9 and 12 and based in New York City. However, the collaboration of German Marxists and American radicals was quickly marred by a conflict of interest. When it became apparent that Stephen Pearl Andrews, the dominant figure in the two American branches, was involved with faddish issues, such as spiritualism and free love, the German sections appealed to the organization's parent body for disciplinary action against the Americans. Section 12 was suspended from the International in 1871, and American socialism reverted to its immigrant core.

American socialists were ineffectual during the 1870's. In 1877 the Socialist Labor Party (SLP) was formed from the ruins of the American sections of the IWA. The first permanent socialist party, it maintained a precarious existence for a decade. Then, in the 1890's under the leadership of Daniel DeLeon, the SLP attained a degree of stability and began to campaign in local and national elections. But its advocacy of class warfare, and the decision to create a socialist labor union to compete with the anti-socialist American Federation of Labor alienated many potential supporters. The SLP was to remain a small, doctrinaire sect of devoted Marxists, with little impact on American politics.

Although the achievements of socialist political organizations warranted little applause, by the end of the nineteenth century socialist economic and political concepts had once again become popular with a faction of American intellectuals. Discontented with the course of American society, they sought in socialism a solution to the problems of industrialization. The new sentiment was epitomized by Edward Bellamy's utopian socialist novel, Looking Backward, which made its appearance in 1888. Representing a "home-grown" bourgeois variety of socialism, Bellamy rejected the notion of class struggle while approving the goal of a "Cooperative Commonwealth."[3] The novel pictured an orderly, rational industrial society, without the vast differences of wealth being created by the American Industrial Revolution. However, the "Nationalist Clubs" which Bellamy's novel generated were not political organizations. It remained for the People's Party to channel the disaffection into a political movement. To American radicals, Populism proved a disappointment, and when its emphasis shifted to the merits of the free coinage of silver, they were left again in political limbo.

Three groups of American socialists emerged from the 1896

Populist defection to the Democrats.[4] The Socialist Labor Party continued to field candidates and propagandize its theories, but the movement was heading for trouble. Dissatisfaction with DeLeon's leadership would split the party in a few years. Meanwhile, many reformers chose to renounce political activity in favor of an educational campaign for direct legislation. The Social Reform League, headed by W.D.P. Bliss, a well-known Christian Socialist, appeared as the national expression of the movement. As with the Bellamy clubs, the Social Reform League suffered from a lack of direction and soon receded into obscurity. A revival of communitarianism offered still another possibility. In 1897 the Social Democracy of America united the American Railway Union workers led by Eugene V. Debs and groups of political socialists from the Midwest. Its goal was to colonize a western state in the name of the Cooperative Commonwealth. The union was tenuous from the start, as the Midwestern faction tried to mold its local organization into a political party to change society through electoral victories.

By 1898, the failure of the colonization scheme had been recognized by the Midwestern group, which then tried to capture the movement for its own ends. When the colonizers proved to be firmly in control of the organization, the political socialists withdrew to form the Social Democratic Party (SDP). Midwestern members were strengthened by the addition of groups of New York Jewish radicals and Massachusetts socialists, all ex-Socialist Laborites dissatisfied with DeLeon's tactics. The final crisis of organization came in 1900 when a group of dissidents (known as the "Kangaroos") led by New York lawyer Morris Hillquit deserted the SLP, and after considerable bickering, joined the SDP to form the Socialist Party of America.[5]

The last years of the century were important years of decision for the American socialists. Although the Socialist Party continued to be an amalgam of regional and ideological factions who found it difficult to submerge their autonomy into the new national organization, both the tactics and the ideology of twentieth-century American socialism were finalized when the Socialist Party came into existence.[6] In spite of the differences, the party was a unified body -- socialist and committed to the destruction of the capitalist system through the class struggle. However, the class struggle was to be expressed in terms of political action, not violent revolution. Socialism would be ushered in either after an electoral triumph or as the culmination of a long series of reforms. ("Socialism is coming all the time," Victor Berger, the socialist leader in Milwaukee, liked to say.) The basis for union was the desire to be more than a millenial sect, the view they held of DeLeon's Socialist Labor Party. The long range goal, the Cooperative Commonwealth, was to be supplemented by immediate demands, designed to meet the current societal problems caused by the capitalist economic system.[7] True to its Marxist traditions, the party directed its appeal to the working class. Socialists championed as part of their demands an eight-hour day for all workers, and a social security program. Other demands included the establishment of a Department of Labor, a graduated income tax, the abolition of the Senate, and collective ownership of utilities and transportation systems. Although always considering itself the political representative of the workers, the Socialist Party from its inception recognized other groups as potential allies. Resolutions passed at the 1901 Unity Convention identified the socialists as champions of the blacks, and of women, both groups with special grievances against the American system.

Paralleling the development in the nineteenth century of an American socialist movement was the growth of an organized protest against the unequal treatment of women. From early in American colonial history, individual women had rebelled against the limits society placed on their activities. In Massachusetts Bay Colony, Anne Hutchinson demanded the right to preach and instruct New England Puritans, and in the Maryland settlement a wealthy Baltimore widow, Margaret Brent, sought and was refused voting privileges. However, the colonial protests did not reflect organized activity on behalf of women as an oppressed group. Not feminists, Hutchinson and Brent have been more aptly described as female rebels.[8] Without an ideology, their protests suggest personal rejection of limits, but no questioning of the traditional role of women and their subservience to men. An active feminist movement did not develop in the United States until the 1850's.

As was socialism, the rise of feminism was directly related to the appearance of the Industrial Revolution in the United States.[9] Industry began to remove from the home work traditionally allocated to women. The process in the early nineteenth century was not far advanced, but it did create a small group of women with enough leisure time to consider the implications of their changed situations.

At the same time that the factory was taking away from these women their social functions, the socially-stereotyped personality of the "lady" was being created.[10] A "lady" was characterized by her piety, purity, and submissiveness. She was also thought to be completely absorbed in and devoted to her family.[11] This image of the "true woman" was seen as justification for limiting her sphere of activity. Although the amount of work required no longer demanded it, "social" expectations forced the "lady" to find her home absorbing all her energy. It was against the stereotype "lady" that early feminists rebelled.

Feminism can be seen as a reaction to the societal definition of femininity. It has been defined as a question of autonomy, the issue being woman's freedom to determine her own course of action unhampered by restrictions imposed by a stereotyped image of "woman's nature."[12] Feminism rejects the notion that woman's function in society is determined or limited by her womanhood. Its nineteenth-century adherents sought to alleviate the inequitable political, economic, and social restrictions which had been placed on half the population. In doing so they hoped to create a new personality, a new self-image for woman based on her human characteristics rather than her sexual ones.

While industrialism created the context for the feminist revolt, the immediate cause of the woman movement was the abolitionist crusade.[13] Since charitable organizations offered women a socially acceptable outlet for activity outside the home, many ladies were led to participate in antislavery efforts. Female abolitionists were often reponsible for raising funds to support the movement, and their

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participation was encouraged until several women demanded the right to join male organizations and speak before mixed audiences. The reaction of conservative abolitionists to the widened role for women helped precipitate a split in the antislavery movement. Many members wished to maintain the limited objectives of abolitionism, keeping the movement free from ties to other reform goals. When women sought to extend the rights of their sex through the antislavery crusade, the movement divided over the question of tactics.

The growing awareness of their second-class status within the antislavery movement was brought into focus for several women abolitionists who attended the 1840 international antislavery conference in London. American women were refused seats as delegates, being forced to listen to the proceedings while concealed in an adjoining chamber. After returning home, two of the women, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, brooded over their fate, and meeting again eight years later, issued a call for a convention of women to be held at Seneca Falls, New York. This first organized protest for woman's rights lasted two days, issued a revolutionary manifesto, "The Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions," and concluded with a debate over the suffrage question.

Feminism had asserted its independence from the antislavery crusade, yet the two remained intertwined for two more decades. The leaders were active in both movements, but even more than an overlap of personalities was a common rhetoric. It was easy to substitute "husband" for "master" in the antislavery arguments, and thereby see the existing marriage arrangement as a denial of human rights. Just as in abolitionist literature, the rhetoric of feminism came from the ideology of the American Revolution. "We hold these truths to be self-evident," the first feminists wrote, "that all men and women are created equal;" and that women were being denied "certain inalienable rights," among which were "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The feminists wanted to apply the principles of the Revolution to themselves as well as to the black slaves. "The history of mankind," they continued, "is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her." The women at Seneca Falls who wrote these words concluded that the "equality of human rights results necessarily from the fact of the identity of the race in capabilities and responsibilities."[14] Their sex had too long been satisfied with the circumscribed role which social custom had dictated; it was time to enlarge women's sphere.

Many of the inequalities against which the early feminists protested stemmed from English Common Law which denied the legal existence of a married woman. A passage from Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England, the source for much of nineteenth-century American jurisprudence, stated, "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law; that is the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage or at least is incorporated and consolidated under that of her husband...."[15] The married woman was represented to the world by her husband; legally her work and her wages belonged to the "head of the household." Because they denied a woman's very existence, anachronistic legal and political restrictions often became symbolic of the whole range of inequalities based on sex. Feminists attacked laws which prohibited married women from owning property, and those which automatically gave a father custody of a child. But it was their disenfranchisement which attracted most attention. In the realm of politics, only one person represented the family. As other restrictions were lessened, the necessity of winning the ballot for women began to receive an inordinate amount of attention from the feminists.

Feminists had assumed that their services to the antislavery crusade would be rewarded after the Civil War by the enfranchisement of women, however, their hopes proved illusory. With the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments guaranteeing rights only to "males," the radical wing of the woman movement, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, broke with the other members and created the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). Favoring reforms in many areas, the NWSA published a journal (appropriately called The Revolution) devoted to castigating society for its treatment of women. While the vote was important, it still remained only one aspect of the NWSA's demands. Woman's domesticity was seen as the key to the limitations placed on her activities. Although its analysis of the cause of inequality was quoted in terms of woman's role in the home, the NWSA was able to offer only feeble solutions, such as its support of liberalized divorce laws.

A rival organization was founded almost immediately, the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), which chose to concentrate on winning the vote, ignoring other aspects of woman's inequality.

Appalled by the unfeminine characteristics of the NWSA, the AWSA was further repulsed by the apparent moral laxity of the Stanton-Anthony faction. When its two leaders became associated with the notorious Victoria Woodhull, the NWSA appeared to approve of her arguments in favor of free love. Woodhull and her sister, Tennessee Claflin, were involved in numerous unsavory schemes and their imprudent charge of adultery against a popular minister drove them into disrepute with the staid ASWA. The Woodhull scandal shocked radical women and silenced the feminist movement for several decades. When the NWSA emerged again at the end of the century it was much more conservative.

The two suffrage groups remained divided until 1890, when, with a new generation of leaders, the personality quarrels were overcome and the unified National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) was formed. The reunion also symbolized a change in ideology within the woman movement. The NAWSA dropped attempts to change the socially acceptable role of woman and directed all efforts towards gaining the vote.[16]

In spite of the movement's weaknesses, women had made gains in a number of areas; professions and universities were being opened to them, and several demeaning laws based on Blackstone's edict had been removed from the statute books. In view of these advances, it has been suggested that the changed ideology signified an attempt to consolidate the victories already won.[17] The vote appeared to be the one block in an otherwise steady progress towards equality. With the regrouping of the woman's organization, the movement put all of its effort into removing this final inequality. Victory was achieved just in time for the 1920 election, seventy-two years after the women at Seneca Falls first raised the demand. Except for the last grumblings of the venerable Mrs. Stanton, or the disquieting writings of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who would soon become the sage of the feminist revival, the suffragists attained a degree of social acceptance in the twentieth century - - an acceptance reflected in the changed nature of their goals.[18] The woman movement could no longer be called a feminist protest since it no longer challenged social roles. Peace, social purity, public health, woman suffrage, and the removal of woman's legal disabilities were the goals for which the organized women agitated.[19]

By 1900, the woman movement had rejected the notion of its nineteenth-century leaders that the equality of men and women was due to their common humanity. Instead, the ways in which women differ from men began to be stressed as the primary argument in favor of suffrage. Women needed the vote precisely because they had an unique, feminine contribution to make to government. Twentieth-century suffrage leaders accepted the existence of different spheres for men and women. Since it was assumed that a woman's principal vocation was motherhood, it followed naturally that woman's sphere was the home. However, the woman movement argued for a somewhat enlarged definition of that institution. Rheta Childe Dorr, a spokeswoman for the movement, acknowledged that the platitude, "woman's place is in the home," was one "...no woman will ever dissent from, provided two words are dropped out of it."

> Woman's place is Home. Her task is homemaking. Her talents, as a rule, are mainly for homemaking. But Home is not contained within the four walls of an individual home. Home is the community. The city full of people is the Family. The public school is the real Nursery. And badly do the Home and the Family and the Nursery need their mother.[20]

When tasks formerly performed by the family such as education of children were removed to the control of the state, Dorr maintained that participation by women would make a more efficient, more responsive government. The ideology of the suffrage movement had shifted from demands for justice based on natural rights and woman's desire to develop her full potential to an argument of expediency. Suffrage had become a means to achieve other reforms rather than a goal in itself.[21]

Concentration on the vote reflected the Progressive era's optimistic faith that social evils could be cured through legislation. It was thought that women would use their new power to pass humanitarian laws which the male electorate had neglected. The woman movement argued that woman's opinions and ideals differed radically from man's due to centuries of different training. While men automatically saw society from a profit-oriented point of view, women, because of the years of service to the home, were in a position to regard society in "human" terms rather than monetary ones.[22] This was not meant to be construed as a sign of woman's superiority, but it did seem to point to the necessity of giving her a voice in the government.

The new arguments in favor of woman suffrage marked the withdrawal of the woman movement from the feminism of its founders. However, by the second decade of the twentieth century, a new feminism had emerged in American society. Largely a product of big city bohemias, the new feminists attached themselves to the socialist crusade, just as early feminists had been part of the antislavery movement. The hope was that socialist equality would also mean freedom for women. This new feminism agreed with the suffrage movement that the enfranchisement of women was important, but it demanded more than political reforms. As one historian of the "new women" has written, "These feminists were an unique breed of reformer.... They ultimately wanted a value revolution in American society. Changing one or two discriminatory laws against women was not enough; they wanted a complete reorientation of attitudes toward women's roles."[23] They advocated birth control and questioned the necessity of marriage. Feminism often merged into demands for sexual freedom. Above all, feminists wanted for the individual woman the right to make her own decisions without regard for social preconceptions of woman's nature.

By the time the Socialist Party was established as the political representative of American radicalism, it could look to two phases of a woman's movement. Although the feminists were scarcely vocal in 1900, the ideas that later motivated the movement were beginning to find audiences, and the suffrage movement was gaining momentum, moving towards its final effort. The problem for the socialists was how to respond to the expectations of this vocal minority of women. As a political party, socialists had to ascertain the potential support to be gained from the woman movement and the most effective method for combining the woman issue with the party's goal of a socialist state.

In the nineteenth century, American socialism had few ties with the middle-class woman's rights and woman's suffrage associations. The utopian socialist communities offered women an alternative to Victorian family life, and much of the early support for the communities came from women. However, association brought problems as well as rewards, for both the woman's movement and American socialism. The moral codes of some of these communities fostered the early connection between feminism, socialism, and free love, a slander both groups were later forced to direct much propaganda to refute.

Cooperation between the woman's rights movement and socialist labor organizations was restricted by the middle-class character of the feminists and by the socialists' insistence on the primacy of economic reforms. Labor organizations were quick to challenge the feminist movement for its neglect of the wage earner. The Seneca Falls convention drew an immediate condemnation from an Albany, New York, labor journal. The Mechanics Advocate wrote:

> The women who demand for their sex so many supposed Rights, and who aim to be placed upon an equal footing with the sterner sex, in all the relations of life, belong to a class that is, for the most part, unaffected by the serious evils that weigh so crushingly upon all classes of female operatives.... Work out a reform in them; bring out a diminution of the hours of toil, and an increase in wages, and then it will be time enough for you to preach up the strange doctrines contained in your Declaration of Rights.[24]

The workers' paper was offering an important criticism, for throughout the nineteenth century feminists ignored the plight of the workingwoman.

The cause of labor in general was repudiated by the American feminists. Susan B. Anthony, the suffrage movement's most dedicated member, urged women to better their positions by acting as strikebreakers, and The Revolution, the Stanton-Anthony journal, was printed in a "rat office," which paid less than the union scale. When, due to these events, the National Labor Congress refused to admit Anthony as a delegate in 1869, Stanton concluded that the laboring classes would ever be the worst enemies of woman suffrage.[25]

Their middle-class, native American background deterred most nineteenth-century feminists from seeking an active role in the immigrant socialist movement. Not until late in her life did Elizabeth Cady Stanton begin to see a connection between socialism and woman's rights. For the socialists, however, association with feminists challenged the unity of the infant Marxist movement. Although the socialist American Worker's League proposed in 1853 to open membership to all workers "without respect of occupation, language, color or sex," enfranchising women did not meet with unanimous approval.[26] Being anticlerics, the German immigrant socialists feared the increased power of the church if women voted. Since women were "naturally" more religious than men the church would be able to control their votes and socialism would be doomed to electoral failure.[27]

The American sections of the International Workingmen's Association were also beset with problems related to the feminists. Victoria Woodhull and her sister, whose activities had scandalized and split the suffrage movement, belonged to Section 12 of the IWA. To avoid the image of "irresponsible free lovers," the socialists demanded the expulsion of the sisters and their mentor, Stephen Pearl

Andrews. The death of the International soon followed, and both socialism and feminism receded into a twenty-year period of obscurity.

Not until socialism began to appeal to American-born reformers did the aspirations of the woman movement become an important element of its ideology. Edward Bellamy regarded the goals of the woman's rights organizations as consistent with the new socialist order, and another nineteenth-century socialist, Laurence Gronlund, observed that women would surely find equality in the Cooperative Commonwealth.[28] But organized American socialism at the end of the century was mainly concerned with defining its relationship to the labor movement. The Socialist Party, when it was established in 1901, had a scant history of cooperation with the woman movement.

Even though the enfranchisement of women was part of their first campaign platform, woman's rights and the woman movement did not initially attract the socialists' attention. The party's growth to awareness of the woman question and action to meet the demands of women offers one approach to an evaluation the nature of American socialism in the early twentieth century. It seemed for a time that the socialists would become a permanent, nationally-based alternative to the two major parties. In 1912, the socialist candidate for President won six percent of the votes. A congressman had been elected in 1910, and in the same year, the socialists of Milwaukee put in office their candidate for mayor, making that Wisconsin city the first large municipality controlled by a Marxist government. Yet 1912 is generally considered to have been the high point of American socialism.

The course of the American Socialist Party after 1912 provides the substance for historical disputes over the nature of the Socialist Party and the relationship of socialism to American life. Initial historical interpretations suggested that the party began a precipitous decline in 1912, due to its decision to expel the left-wing, anarcho-syndicalists who wished to use sabotage rather than politics as a revolutionary tactic.[29] Later historians attempted to revise this view of American socialism, arguing that the expulsion of the left in 1912 was not the cause of a disastrous decline in appeal. Party support was shown to have leveled off in the years from 1912 to 1917, although socialist activities on behalf of the oppressed were increased. Since the 1912 decision to rid the party of its extremists did not seem to adequately account for the party's failure, the new interpretation turned, for an explanation, to government suppression during World War I and internal dissension over the party's reaction to the revolution in Russia.[30]

Although the historians did not agree on the causes for the party's demise, all conceded that the party was an expression of American radicalism. The characteristics and fate of the Socialist Party have been used to exemplify the relevancy (or irrelevancy) of radicalism to American society. During the 1950's the failure of the Socialist Party was used to demonstrate the alien nature of radicalism vis à vis the American tradition. However, in the 1960's it became important for "New Left" historians to create a radical tradition in the American past. Because of the character of the party -- its open, largely decentralized structure -- the Socialist Party had become a guide for contemporary American radicals.[31]

If radicalism is assumed to represent a challenge to the fundamental attitudes and values of a society, as well as to the political and economic structures on which the society is founded (a definition seemingly acceptable to the "New Left"[32]), then the radicalism of the Socialist Party is open to question. The Socialist Party never restricted membership; its constitution provided that: "Every person, resident of the United States, of the age of eighteen years and upwards, without distinction of race, color, sex or creed, who has severed connection with all other political parties, and who subscribes to the principles of the party, shall be eligible for membership."[33] However, membership alone is not sufficient to indicate a party's radicalism. Its response to the appeals of special interest groups gives insight into the socialist commitment to radical social change. Beginning with the 1901 Unity Convention the party was pledged to work for equal rights for women and blacks, two groups not defined strictly by class. However, Socialist sympathy for the plight of these two groups was soon forced into the background as the party's relationship to the trade union movement dominated its early years. Only as the party emerged in 1908, confident of its position in American society, did the problems of special interest groups again attract the party's attention.

Contrary to the "New Left" analysis, it has recently been shown that socialists were, on the whole, indifferent to the oppression of the blacks.[34] However, the socialist response to the woman movement has been largely ignored by historians.[35] Yet the woman movement was well organized during the Progressive era, and the implications of equality for women aroused considerable public debate. The Socialist Party made a conscious effort to involve socialists in the woman movement, and to tie together socialist theory and the position of women in American society, an effort they never attempted with blacks. Through their interpretation of the causes of woman's subjugation, socialists made woman's equality rest on the establishment of the Cooperative Commonwealth. A special department was created to encourage women to join the Socialist Party, and socialists were active in the woman suffrage campaign, the one issue on which women as a group could unite. The outcome of their efforts indicates that a radical restructuring of American values was never a socialist goal. The socialist response to the woman movement suggests instead that the party was a conservative institution, which wished only to allow an economically deprived class to practice the values held by the majority of Americans.

NOTES: CHAPTER I

[1] Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams, (Boston, 1918), p. 380.

[2] In 1901, Morris Hillquit, as the historian of American socialism to that time, denied that the "modern" socialist movement was influenced by the early tradition of the utopian socialists. Hillquit insisted that modern socialism was a product of the fully developed capitalist system. Utopian socialism suggested only "immature" protest. (History of Socialism in the United States [5th rev. and enl. ed.; New York, 1909], p. 135.) While Hillquit may have found it politically wise to repudiate "utopian" schemes, the communitarian movement remained an important source of American socialist tradition. The desire to withdraw from the world continued to be an alternative for radicals who tired of battle with the capitalist enemy. In the state of Washington particularly, the strong socialist movement in the twentieth century grew out of several nineteenth-century socialist colonies. (Barbara Winslow, "The Decline of Socialism in Washington; 1910-1925," [unpublished Master's thesis, University of Washington, 1969], p. 11.)

[3] "Cooperative Commonwealth" was the phrase used by American socialists (particularly those with roots in the nineteenth-century movement) to describe the desired state of the future. It was popularized by Laurence Gronlund, whose book, The Cooperative Commonwealth in Its Outlines; an Exposition of Modern Socialism (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1884), was an early expression of Marxism in an American context. Gronlund eschewed the idea of class warfare, preferring to picture the gradual (peaceful) development of the new society. Of the Cooperative Commonwealth, Gronlund wrote, "We shall have Corporate Responsibility, Equality, Freedom, all three combined in INTERDEPENDENCE, SOCIAL COOPERATION." (p. 87) "The Cooperative Commonwealth, then, is that future Social Order -- the natural heir of the present one -- in which all important instruments of production have been taken under collective control; in which the citizens are consciously public functionaries, and in which their labors are rewarded according to results." (p. 90) Until Bellamy published Looking Backward, Gronlund's work remained uninfluential. However, the novelist's portrayal of the Cooperative Commonwealth aroused a great deal of interest in the idea of socialism.

[4] This discussion follows that of Howard H. Quint, The Forging of American Socialism: Origins of the Modern Movement (New York, 1953), chaps, vii, viii, ix.

[5] The Unity Convention, held in 1901 marked the official union of the groups. However, the various factions had combined in 1900 to support one candidate -- Eugene V. Debs -- for President.

[6] The regional and ideological differences within the Socialist Party have been characterized by most of the historians of American socialism. Ira Kipnis (The American Socialist Movement, 1897-1912 [New York, 1952]) drew a distinction between right, center, and left ideologies. Kipnis' sympathies lay with the left, the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World faction. The right and center, he presented as little more than middle-class reformers. (See chap. vii, "Socialist Ideology, 1901-1904.") David Shannon, (The Socialist Party of America: a History [Chicago, 1955]), discarded ideology in favor of a regional survey, stressing the different tactics used by different geographical areas. His intention was to prove the heterogeneous nature of the socialist movement, a characteristic Shannon found necessary for political success. (See chap. i; chap. ii concentrates on non-regional distinctions of lesser importance: social class, national origins, religion, and education.) James Weinstein, in a revisionist history of the party (The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925 [New York, 1967]), noted several "tendencies" within the party, based both on region and ideology, but found that both Shannon and Kipnis "underestimate the unifying strength of the Socialist's anticapitalist perspective." (pp. 4-5)

[7] The issue of immediate demands was not finally resolved until the party's 1904 Presidential nominating convention, and it continued to be troublesome throughout the history of the party. Although all socialists could agree on the ultimate goal, the amount of emphasis to be given to propagandizing immediate demands divided the party on several occasions. For one example, see below, chap. iv.

[8] The distinction is made by Andrew Sinclair, in The Emancipation of the American Woman (New York, 1966), p. 32.

[9] Aileen S. Kraditor (ed.), "Introduction," Up from the Pedestal; Selected Writings in the History of American Feminism (Chicago, 1968), pp. 14-15. William L. O'Neill (Everyone was Brave; the Rise and Fall of Feminism in America [Chicago, 1969]) attributes the rise of feminism to a "reaction to the great pressures that accompanied the emergence of the nuclear family." (p. 5) The nuclear family heightened the separation of spheres of activity, and tended to group women in a separate class. With this increased sense of special identity, women with leisure began to react to the inconsistency between special status and unequal treatment.

[10] Sinclair (The Emancipation of the American Woman, p. 113) designated the term "lady" to apply to middle-class women in leisure.

[11] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," American Quarterly, XVIII (Summer, 1966), 152.

[12] Kraditor, Up from the Pedestal, pp. 7-8.

[13] Both William L. O'Neill (Everyone Was Brave, pp. 4-5) and Aileen Kraditor (Up from the Pedestal, pp. 13-14) developed the distinction between the immediate cause of feminism found in the abolitionist movement, and the influence of the changing economic system which altered the family structure.

[14] "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions," (First Woman's Rights Convention, Seneca Falls, New York, July 19-20, 1848), reprinted in Kraditor, Up from the Pedestal, pp. 184-188.

[15] Quoted in Mary R. Beard, Woman as Force in History; a Study in Traditions and Realities (New York, 1946), p. 89.

[16] The story of the suffrage organizations has been recounted in several recent histories of the woman movement. Eleanor Flexner's Century of Struggle; the Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (New York, 1971) is the most detailed account of the movement (see chaps, vii, x, and xvi). That the suffrage organizations lost their radical nature by the 1890's is the theme of The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920, by Aileen Kraditor (Garden City, New York, 1971). (See especially chap. iii.)

[17] O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave, p. 150.

[18] Charlotte Perkins Gilman's ideas are discussed in chap. ii.

[19] The goals were listed by Rheta Childe Dorr, whose book, What Eight Million Women Want (Boston, 1910), was a popular account of the aspirations of the woman movement. In this case, Dorr represented the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the largest group of organized women in the United States.

[20] Ibid., p. 327.

[21] Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, pp. 38-39.

[22] Dorr, What Eight Million Women Want, p. 5; pp. 11-12.

[23] June Sochen, The New Woman in Greenwich Village, 1910-1920 (Chicago, 1972), p. 25.

[24] Quoted in Sinclair, The Emancipation of the American Woman, p. 291.

[25] O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave*, p. 20.

[26] Quoted from the Preamble to the League's platform in David Herreshoff, *American Disciples of Marx: from the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era* (Detroit, 1968), p. 63.

[27] *Ibid*., p. 29.

[28] Edward Bellamy, *Equality* (New York, 1897), pp. 130-153; Gronlund, *The Cooperative Commonwealth*, pp. 179-191.

[29] That the party declined rapidly after 1912 was the theme of the first major study of the American Socialist Party, *The American Socialist Movement, 1897-1912*, by Ira Kipnis. Kipnis' assumptions were followed by Daniel Bell, in *Marxian Socialism in the United States* (Princeton, 1952). Bell called the years after 1912 a "trailing penumbra." The same interpretation was given by David Shannon in *The Socialist Party of America; a History*. Shannon was concerned with the Socialist Party as a political party, and saw its decision to expel the left in 1912 as a violation of a basic principle of American political parties. "The major American political parties are anything but homogeneous," he wrote. (p. 260)

[30] This interpretation is associated with James Weinstein's account, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925*.

[31] All historians after Kipnis agreed on the essentially radical nature of American socialism. Bell and Shannon reflect the "consensus" tradition in American historiography, popularized in the 1950's. Basically they followed the analysis of Louis Hartz, who, in *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York, 1955), pictured socialism as alien to the political and intellectual traditions of American society. Because of its radicalism the Socialist Party could not hope to succeed in the American society which lacked the traditions necessary to support a Marxist class analysis. Hartz's ideas have more recently been developed by Gerald Friedberg in a biography of John Spargo, an important figure in the American socialist movement. ("Marxism in the United States: John Spargo and the Socialist Party of America," [unpublished Ph.D. disseration, Harvard University, 1964.]) Friedberg noted the impossibility of Americanizing Marxist ideas, the primary example being the socialist stand against America's entry into World War I. Weinstein, representing the revisionist "New Left" school, challenged only the assumption that radicalism was not part of the American tradition. Of all the interpretations, only Kipnis, writing in the early 1950's, questioned the radicalism of the Socialist Party. Kipnis, as noted above (n. 6) found a radical strain in the SP, centered around the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.). However, the I.W.W. was defeated in

1912, and the party taken over by the "reformist" right-center coalition. The ideological divisions are not as clearly defined as Kipnis' arguments suggest. Although Kipnis identified the I.W.W. faction with radicalism, members of this group were among the strongest opponents to feminist challenges to societal attitudes towards male and female roles.

[32] Weinstein stated that the Socialist Party represented a "... commitment to a socialist reorganization of society as the solution to the inequalities and corrupting social values it believed were inherent in American capitalism." (p. ix) Christopher Lasch defined radicalism as a challenge to the cultural values of a society. (The New Radicalism in America (1889-1963); the Intellectual as a Social Type [New York, 1965], pp. ix-xviii.)

[33] This was the membership section of the party's constitution adopted by the 1904 convention. (Socialist Party, Proceedings of the National Convention of the Socialist Party [Chicago, 1904], p. 104.) At no time was membership restricted due to race or sex. In 1912, the provision was amended to define the "principles of the Socialist Party" as including "political action, and unrestricted political rights for both sexes." (Socialist Party, Proceedings of the National Convention of the Socialist Party [Chicago, 1912], p. 119).

[34] R. Laurence Moore, "Flawed Fraternity -- American Socialist Response to the Negro, 1901-1912," Historian, XXXII (November, 1969), 1-18.

[35] Weinstein dealt quite unsatisfactorily with the role of women in the party (see below, chap. v). Of the other major studies, only Kipnis considered the party's response to feminism and he failed to see the radical nature of feminist demands, picturing instead the right-center's support of woman suffrage as an example of its reformist tendencies (p. 152). Mari Jo Buhle, in "Woman and the Socialist Party, 1901-1914," (reprinted in Edith H. Altbach (ed.), From Feminism to Liberation [Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971], pp. 65-86) was concerned primarily with women in the Socialist Party and their "self-activity."

CHAPTER II

"The Slave of a Slave:" The Socialist Interpretation of the Woman Question

It was to be expected that a political party cast in the role of protector of the oppressed would be sensitive to the increasingly vocal demands of both phases of the woman movement. The party's conscience was pricked by the movement's description of the subservient position of women, and it responded with a special program designed to reveal the socialist identification with the equal rights campaign. However, the party's activities were limited by the socialist interpretation of the "woman question." A phrase popular during the Progressive era, the "woman question" alluded to challenges made by the woman movement to the traditional image of woman as wife and mother. When used, its meaning was frequently expanded to include questions related to marriage, divorce and the future of the family. As described by a woman sympathetic to the demands for equality, "The woman question deals with the position that woman should hold in our social organism, and seeks to determine how she can best develop her powers and her abilities, in order to become a useful member of human society, endowed with equal rights and serving society according to her best capacity."[1] Socialist beliefs about the "position woman should hold in [their] social organism" prevented the party from ever fully subscribing to the goals of the woman movement.

As an assessment of contemporary social values, socialism certainly acknowledged that the treatment of women in western countries was unjust. Throughout the nineteenth century the subjugation of women was an important element in the socialist critique of "bourgeois capitalism." The utopian socialists had suggested that the treatment of women was one measure of a society's progress. However, for "scientific socialists" the status of women was not only the reflection of a society's morality. In later socialist literature, woman's role came to be interpreted in terms of a society's economic system. The subordinate position of women was shown to be the result of her economic dependence on man.

"All moral, political, and social questions resolve themselves in the end into economic questions," an American socialist wrote in 1906.[2] This principle on which Marxists based their explanations of sociological phenomena was the assumption behind the socialist analysis of the woman question. Phillip Rappaport, a comrade from Ohio, made the statement in his book Looking Forward: a Treatise on the Status of Woman and the Origin and Growth of the Family and the State, a study described by one socialist reviewer as a basic text on the woman question for party organizers and lecturers.[3] Rappaport's account of the subject was not without precedent, however; the ideas are mainly those of Frederick Engels, whose work, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, predates it by more than twenty years.[4] Rappaport extended the theme to include more recent supportive evidence, but did not alter the essence of Engels' interpretation.

The socialist explanation of woman's inequality was based on its account of the historical development of the institution of monogamous marriage. It was assumed that women were considered inferior only in societies in which the family consisted of one man and one woman. Engels proposed that a causal relationship existed between the level of a society's technology and social institutions, such as marriage and the family. When a society's methods of obtaining a livelihood changed, so did the marriage pattern and the status accorded women.[5] Based on this correlation, Engels divided history into three stages -- savagery, barbarism, and civilization -- each with a distinct familial arrangement. According to this argument, monogamous marriage, with its inferior treatment of women, was of recent origin, emerging in the period of civilization along with the development of private property. Wealth, in the form of private ownership of the tools necessary to maintain life, made possible the slavery of those individuals who were not toolowners. Since they did not own the means of production (tools belonged to the male's kinship group), women became the first slaves. Engels therefore concluded that women lost status at the time of this economic revolution from communal to private ownership, because she became the property of one man. Her status had originally rested on her contribution to the work of the communal household. Because she had shared in the duties which served the whole tribe, woman had been accorded a position of respect and equality. When she became the servant of one man her relationship to work in the community was severed, resulting in a loss of status.

Engels' study was the foundation for all American socialist explanations of the origins of the woman question. Using Engels' "historical" interpretation, Rappaport, the American popularizer, concluded that the manner of providing the necessities of life had more to do with the status of woman than her supposed physical inferiority. (Woman's physical weakness was an argument frequently used by those who opposed the aims of the woman movement.) Anthropological studies more recent than Engels' suggested to Rappaport that wherever women assisted in procuring the means of subsistence, they were treated well and enjoyed a position in society equal to that of men. Where they contributed nothing, where their livelihoods came through a relationship with one male, women were thought to be inferior to men.[6] For socialists, therefore, the woman question was explained as a question of economic relationships. When women worked in and for society their labor value was as important as that of men and they had an equal status. When women were servants to an individual male instead of the whole community, the socialists argued that woman's labor had no economic worth. Since most women in the early twentieth century were not wage earners, women could not be considered self-sufficient, and so could have no value. Consequently, the only explanation for the subjugation of woman was her economic dependence on man. Contrary to popular belief, the socialists declared, the sexual relationship in most marriages was based not on love, but on money.

During the Progressive period the link between woman's inequality and her economic dependence was also an important part of feminist arguments. Many feminists were closely associated with the American socialist movement; this was especially true of one of their most popular spokeswomen, Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Gilman was affiliated with New York City socialist locals during the initial decade of party activity, and her ideas, first presented in Women and Economics (1898), particularly impressed the socialist women in New York.[7] Her arguments reiterated the socialist analysis of woman's inferior status, although Gilman attributed them to the influence of Lester Frank Ward, an American sociologist, rather than to Frederick Engels.[8]

Gilman agreed with the socialists that in contemporary society women had no economic value; the female's only value was a sexual one. Since her livelihood depended on her ability to attract a male sponsor, "woman's economic profit [came] through the power of sex-attraction." Gilman called woman a "nonproductive consumer," one who only took from society, while returning nothing in the form of work.[9] This condition is peculiar to the human race, Gilman thought, since in no other animal species is the female dependent on the male for sustenance.

The economic dependence of woman had created an unhealthy situation, Gilman felt, because it led to the exaggeration in women of certain secondary sexual attributes which were actually detrimental to the individual and to society. Many "feminine" traits were due not to an innate feminine nature but to woman's economic reliance on man, and the need to enhance pleasing sexual characteristics to ensure "sexual selection" and support. Woman's supposed delicacy was an example of a sexual distinction which had been overly developed due to woman's dependence on man, and the limiting of woman's activities was another illustration. Gilman suggested that some activities had for so long been the masculine prerogative that they had come to be thought of as sexual attributes when in reality they were characteristics common to all human beings.[10] Gilman's analysis revived the argument of the early feminists that a woman's humanness was more important than her femininity. By overemphasizing her female characteristics, which Gilman thought were less progressive than the human traits usually associated with the male personality, the economic dependence of woman inhibited the evolution of society.

As is evident in the works of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, one's definition of "woman's nature" generally indicated one's opinion about the woman movement. Individuals who were adamantly opposed to the movement for woman's equality usually pictured woman as physically and intellectually inferior to man, although morally and spiritually superior. These people, christened the "antis" by the suffragists, thought a woman's personality was determined by her femininity. Woman was passive, timid, and above all maternal, while man was active and aggressive. It was believed that rigid boundaries separating the spheres of the sexes were a stabilizing influence on society. Should woman develop a masculine personality, only social chaos could result. On the other hand, Gilman and the feminists thought of women only secondarily in terms related to her biological function. It was necessary for woman to reassert her human personality and shed those negative qualities associated with the "womanly woman." While socialists agreed with Gilman that the woman question was related to woman's nonproductive role, the socialist view of woman's nature was somewhat ambivalent, being neither as rigid as the "antis" nor as undefined as the feminists.

Even Gilman recognized distinctions between the temperament of the sexes, like the male's tendency to fight and the female's tendency to protect and nurture.[11] The socialist writers, however, presumed even greater differences. Although Engels had little to say about woman's nature, August Bebel, the German socialist whose book Woman and Socialism was translated by the party for use in socialist women's study clubs, emphasized personality distinctions he thought based on sexual temperament. Bebel wrote that:

> ...woman is by nature more impulsive than man; she reflects less than he; she has more abnegation, is naiver, and hence is governed by stronger passions, as revealed by the truly heroic self-sacrifice with which she protects her child, or cares for relatives and nurses them in sickness.[12]

Observations about woman's nature were not limited to European socialists; native American writers thought they too could detect a uniquely feminine personality.

Two articles written by Joseph Cohen are significant examples of the socialist attitude, since they brought into the open the issue of a socialist view of woman's nature. Cohen, a socialist labor leader from Philadelphia, offered, in 1909, a study course on socialism printed in monthly installments in the International Socialist Review. Lesson VII dealt with "Socialist Sociology" and lesson VIII, "Socialist Philosophy." In "Socialist Sociology," where he considered the woman question, Cohen used the works of Havelock Ellis, Lester Frank Ward, and Edward Carpenter to prove the organic inequalities between the sexes. Cohen did not mean to imply that women were inferior, but Carpenter had said that woman was nearer to a child or a savage than to a man. As Cohen expressed the difference, "It is the male who searches for new worlds to conquer, while the female conserves what has been gained."[13] These observations passed unchallenged, but Cohen's description in lesson VIII proved less fortunate. Intuition was the impulse below intellect, Cohen wrote, and woman, since she was nearer to the lower forms of life, naturally possessed a good deal more of it than did man.[14]

Cohen's argument aroused a storm of protest from women comrades who flatly denied their inferior mental powers.[15] One noted that Cohen's article sounded like "an appeal to the prejudices of the remote backwaters of conservatism." It most certainly was "not the voice of the socialist prophet."[16] Still, as late as 1916, the Socialist candidate for President could commend woman's powers of intuition. The instincts of women and children were remarkably accurate about things of which they had little knowledge, wrote Allen Benson. Knowledge only dulled woman's instincts.[17]

Most socialists who offered opinions were less impolitic than Joseph Cohen, but many did recognize an important personality difference between male and female. Women were believed to be both more "conservative" and more "individualistic" than men. The charge was made many times by socialists of both sexes. One reporter wrote in the New York Call (one of the daily socialist papers), that it was generally recognized that women were "ignorant, superstitious, and thoughtless," and as educators of children they perpetuated this conservative tradition.[18] "Men are naturally more progressive than women," observed another Call contributor, "owing to a broader life, their greater experience in common enterprise and their political power."[19]

Not only socialists saw woman possessing a conservative personality; so did individuals usually associated with a feminist view of womanhood. Charlotte Perkins Gilman had described man as the destructive element, woman as the conservative member of the race.[20] Similarly, Havelock Ellis, whose studies of human sexuality were widely read in progressive circles, had written, "We have, therefore, to recognize that in men, as in males generally, there is an organic variational tendency to diverge and to progress; in women, as in females generally, an organic tendency, not withstanding all their facility for minor oscillations, to stability and conservatism...." Ellis added that in emphasizing the variational tendency in men, the conservative tendency in women, he was "not talking politics nor throwing any light whatever on the possible effects of women's suffrage."[21] However, in spite of Ellis' warnings, socialists often made the leap from biology to politics and attributed to women as a group a conservative political stance.

Socialists also thought women lacked a spirit of cooperation. Her individualism, as Engels had suggested, was a consequence of woman's slave-like existence as the property of one man. While housework was performed individually, the work of men required them to cooperate.[22] When socialists spoke of the individualism of women, they meant devotion to the individual family, not to the self. Since the aim of socialism was to purge society of this individualism, and replace it with a sense of social responsibility, the individualistic nature of woman was easily seen as detrimental to the achievement of the Cooperative Commonwealth.

Woman's conservatism also impeded the realization of socialism. Because of the "progressive" nature of socialist goals, women were not as easily attracted to socialism as were men. Politically they could not see the value of the Socialist Party, nor were they eager to cooperate for economic reasons. Since women were both politically conservative and by nature individualistic, it was thought to be extremely difficult to organize women workers into labor unions. Unlike the "antis" however, socialists were not sure if "woman's nature" was an innate quality related to her sexual characteristics, or if the personality traits were caused by her training. Chivalry demanded that some characteristics be innate, such as woman's sense of intuition. But her conservative and individualistic attitudes could probably be enlightened. Most likely, with education woman's nature could be changed.[23]

Usually socialist women were the ones who proposed reconstructing woman's nature. What was often considered conservative among women was really timidity caused by a narrow world view, Lida Parce argued in the International Socialist Review. True conservatism, that which means preservation, was also a characteristic of women, but this conservatism actually favored the Socialist Party. Socialism itself was by this definition a conservative force, and women needed only to be freed from mental enslavement to see the appeal of the Cooperative Commonwealth.[24] As for the problem of woman's individualistic nature, it was as easily rationalized. Vida Scudder predicted that women, when educated, would see the similarities between the socialist community and the successfully managed household. Cooperation was habitual to the woman in a family. To be of service to the public, Scudder wrote, "...women have only to socialize their natural powers and to transfer to a larger field the experience in which they are adepts already." Woman had always worked without profit in the home; with patience socialists could show them that the Cooperative Commonwealth would only transfer to society this basically feminine quality.[25]

In spite of the protestations, socialists continued to find woman's conservative, individualistic nature a hindrance to the socialist cause. It was a common complaint of socialist organizers that women resented the interest their men showed in the Socialist Party, particularly the time and money.[26] Women, it seemed, could not reach the highest stage of development until socialism had freed them from their restrictive environments. It was due to the economic basis of the male-female relationship, a relationship similar to the one between the capitalist and the worker, that women had developed such an unresponsive outlook. "In the family," Engels had written, "he [the husband] is the bourgeoisie, the wife represents the proletariat."[27] By defining the woman question in terms of a woman's economic dependence on one man, socialists were able to integrate this particular social reform movement into their theoretical scheme for transforming society. If the family was a miniature of society, with similar oppressed and oppressors, then the solution to the woman question would be found in the abolition of the cause of all economic oppression. When the socialists had established the Cooperative Commonwealth women would no longer be economically dependent on the male sex. If economically independent, they would have achieved equality, and presumably the unprogressive characteristics of the sex would disappear. As it was put by the socialist weekly, the Appeal to Reason, "UNDER SOCIALISM the ladies of creation will be on a par with the lords of creation."[28]

Socialists argued that the economic independence of women offered many advantages. It was a means for women to achieve self-respect. If each woman had the "right to work and the right to all [her] labor produces," women would be freed from the necessity of continuing unsatisfactory marriages for the sake of economic support.[29] Woman's independence would lead to a higher state of marriage, a marriage based on love rather than economic considerations. True love was not possible between master and slave, socialists noted. Only under socialism, when women would be economically independent, would it be possible to attain the ideal marriage.[30] Advantages to the male would be equally numerous. Marriages could be contracted earlier, since a man would not have to wait until his economic situation permitted him to finance a wife. Early marriages would purify society's morals, since men would be able to obtain sexual gratification without recourse to a prostitute.[31] Woman's equality, acquired through socialism, would therefore, solve many of the social and moral questions facing society in the Progressive era. The advantages of their solution to the woman question seemed quite evident, but a problem developed over the tactics Socialists proposed for maintaining woman's equality.

To achieve economic independence it would be necessary for women once again to engage in the work of the community to ensure that their activities had an economic value. From his anthropological analysis Engels had concluded that the inferior status of women was related to the type of work they performed. In the communistic household, before the advent of civilization, the activities of women had been socially necessary. With the establishment of monogamous households, feminine industry lost its public character and became a private service. In short, Engels reasoned, "The wife became the first domestic servant, pushed out of participation in social production."[32] Emancipation could be achieved only through the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry. In substantiating Engels' explanation, Phillip Rappaport pointed out that for centuries women had remained in a state of bondage, because their work had retained its private character. In recent years, however, some progress had been made, as the Industrial Revolution turned household chores into mechanized activities performed by the community. Women naturally followed the work out of the home, into the mills. Rappaport argued that recent laws giving women more rights were due to capitalists' need for their participation in industry.[33]

The socialists surmised that a change in woman's status could come about only by changing her role in the economic system. Proletarian women already occupied an important place in the economy, and socialists viewed non-productive consumers as social parasites. That women should work outside the home was not a moral issue for socialists as it was for many in the Progressive era. Socialists thought that work was a natural instinct of mankind. Unless it was exploited for the private gain of another individual, work fulfilled a basic human need. Only a policy on the type of work women should perform was needed to complete the socialist analysis of the woman question.

In establishing their position, the socialists came into conflict with generally accepted social values. Their theory, that economic independence would be achieved in the Cooperative Commonwealth because women would be encouraged to work, supplied substance for anti-socialist charges that socialism would rob children of their mothers and destroy the home.[34] The home was a venerable institution in the Progressive period. As Charlotte Perkins Gilman told her readers, the public was "accustomed only to the unquestioning acceptance of the home as something perfect, holy, [and] quite above discussion...."[35] And the one unchanging element in the home was the mother. When socialists suggested putting women to work outside the home, many people saw it as a sign that socialism was a threat to social stability. It would break up the family, destroying the very substance on which society was built.

Socialists replied that the capitalist economy had already made the middle-class ideal of the home impossible for families of the working class. As one party member commented, "Sometimes in the mill-towns of Massachusetts there is a ghastly inversion of family relationships. The mother and child toils [sic] in the factory, while the father remains at home, tends the house, cares for the children, gets the meals and even carries the dinner pail to the mother and children in the factory."[36] Socialist papers were also fond of reporting instances in which whole families committed suicide, or mothers or fathers murdered their children because they could not feed them.[37] Although aware of the problems of the home in a capitalist society, socialists seemed unable to accept the implications that their theories had for the future of the home.[38] This was especially obvious in their philosophy of work for women which maintained clearly defined sex roles.

Women should work, the socialists insisted, because it made them economically independent, which was good for society, but they should work at special jobs, held only by women. Each sex should fulfill a separate function. "In other words," wrote Laurence Gronlund, in 1884, "instead of free competition between the sexes, we contend for special vocations for the sexes."[39] There was a vital distinction, Gronlund held, between being equal and being alike. Although the socialist commonwealth provided for woman's economic independence, by avoiding competition between the sexes, it would not turn women into "second-rate men."[40] Of course this solution was only for those women who chose to earn their own living; the socialist state would allow them to do so "honorably and pleasantly."[41] Gronlund did not expect that in the Cooperative Commonwealth a majority of women would be in service to the public. Probably most women would wish to continue to be wives and mothers.

Gronlund's ideas were popularized in the 1880's but American socialists had not noticably altered them by the turn of the century. Charles Vail, whose Principles of Scientific Socialism (1899) and Modern Socialism (1897) were basic socialist texts, reiterated

Gronlund's themes.[42] More important to twentieth-century socialists was the substantiation they received from John Spargo, one of the party's spokesmen for the rights of women. In his book, Applied Socialism, Spargo noted that an equal obligation to labor was part of the socialist demand for woman's independence. This did not mean identical labor, and it applied only to unmarried women. Another solution was needed to maintain the independence of married women.[43]

Probably most American socialists agreed with Spargo that married women belonged to a special class. The question of work for women was inextricably bound up with the picture of woman as mother. Almost unquestionably, all society believed that the maternal instinct was the dominant force in a woman's life. It was the basis for all arguments about woman's temperament. Even Lester Frank Ward, whose progressive sociology was directed towards bettering the position of women, thought woman was guided by a sense of race preservation.[44]

Woman's maternal instinct gave rise to a basic dilemma involving woman's sphere, and the necessity of work. In Socialism and Motherhood, Spargo further developed his position, saying that motherhood is woman's "divinest function." "Motherhood is not for all women, perhaps, but it is surely woman's highest and holiest mission."[45] The conflict then was between woman's femininity, her biological function, and the social requirements of work. It became apparent that for most socialists, once woman became mother, socialist work theories were no longer applicable, and woman's work resumed its individualistic nature.

Even though in a socialist order mothers would not be responsible for society's work, it would still be desirable to maintain their economic independence. State pensions for mothers were offered as a solution but this was originally rejected by the socialists as being too bureaucratic.[46] More in line with the socialist attitude was Spargo's proposal that the husband's income be shared.[47] It was noted that, although impossible in a capitalist system, with socialism the wages of an adult male would be sufficient to meet the requirements of all members of his family.[48] Emerging from socialist theories was the traditional picture of the nuclear family, with specific roles for man and woman.

As did most of society, socialists assumed that motherhood was the ultimate goal of woman's existence. In spite of claims for woman's equality, socialists expected women to marry, have children, and with this, be removed from the work force. Woman's sphere was as real to the socialists as it was to the "antis." However, these ideas did not go unchallenged. Especially within the party, some women (and a few men) expressed annoyance at socialist men who presumed to tell women what they would do in the Cooperative Commonwealth.[49] As a point of reference these women will be called feminists, although many who argued for a woman's right to make her own decisions would probably have denied the label. The new feminism which challenged the "maternal instinct" developed as part of the radicalism associated with the Socialist Party, but its ideas quickly moved beyond a point tolerable to socialist sensibilities.

The "Innocent Rebellion" of the pre-war decade, before the wholesale cultural disaffection of the 1920's, formed the backdrop for the emergence of the new feminism.[50] Socialism and feminism came together in the intellectual climates of Greenwich Village and Chicago. Both began with the same desire to abolish privilege, socialists aiming at economic privilege, feminists, at privilege based on sex. The two movements were for a time able to cooperate, feminists assuming that feminism formed an integral part of the socialist goals. Just as early feminists had used the rhetoric of the anti-slavery crusade to express their goals, the new feminists talked in terms of "sex slavery" and "sex war," class phrases originally from the socialist vocabulary. When socialists spoke of class unity, feminists referred to the "unity of sex." If socialists discussed socializing industry, feminists sought to socialize housework. The feminists saw a relationship between the economic system and the position of women, and they were willing to work for changes in the economy, but at the same time they were seeking to change the values of the society as well as its economic system. Feminists assumed that feminism was the value system the would accompany the new socialist order.[51]

Feminism meant that "woman's prime function in the social organism, like man's is to be a self."[52] The problem of woman's inequality was seen as more than simple economic dependence. It involved also a sense of psychological inferiority. As the women who protested the socialists' position on work for mothers clearly saw, feminism meant, if nothing else, autonomy, and autonomy was exactly what the socialist theory did not seem to permit. While socialists stereotyped woman as wife and mother, feminists were arguing for legalization of birth control information, and the right to voluntary parenthood. By the time of America's entry into World War I it was evident that socialists and feminists had different ideas about the meaning of equality for women.

The problem of priorities seemed to be the cause of the differences which developed between the socialists and the feminists. Using the socialist conception of woman as a conservative, individualistic being, feminists argued that the spirit of cooperation on which the socialist society was based could never be attained as long as that sort of woman was the principal influence on the developing generation. The philosophy of feminism put the goal of woman's liberation ahead of the socialist victory.[53] The solution to woman's subjugation was related to the abolition of oppression (the goal of socialism), but the feminists agreed that "...the slavery of the world is nothing more than the slavery of women."[54] Socialists, on the other hand, assumed that all social questions would be solved, automatically, after the revolution. In the 1880's the socialist position had already been established. Gronlund summarized their view when he wrote, "But for woman to expect that her emancipation will be worked out before that of man is altogether illusive."[55] When feminists tried to advance their goals, socialists accused them of abandoning the socialist cause.

The disagreement over priorities was an expression of a deeper difference between the socialists and the feminists. When feminists spoke of equality they envisioned a position for women in which activities were not limited, and choices had not already been made, but for socialists "woman's rights" was only another club with which to beat capitalist society. When socialists spoke of equal rights they meant that the capitalist system had made it impossible for many of its women to ever attain the capitalist ideal of womanhood. Many women could not remain quietly in their own homes, raising their healthy, happy children. "If woman's place is at home," one socialist asked, "why in the name of conscience haven't we been kept there? Women didn't elect to leave the home.... Every woman loves a home. Glad indeed, would millions of women be if they could stay there."[56] But the capitalist economy had driven women out of the home, into the factory, and it was the plight of the factory women that aroused the moral indignation of socialists, not feminist accusations of unequal treatment.

Factory conditions at the turn of the century were deplorable for both men and women; however, the treatment of female employees seemed particuarly offensive. Sweatshops dominated the employment of women workers. Jobs for women were the lowest paid and offered the fewest possibilities for advancement. Hours were long, with a twelve hour day being fairly representative. Not until 1908 did the Supreme Court uphold a statute limiting hours of women's work. As a result, the typical workingwoman was far removed from the Progressive era's feminine ideal.

Socialism used this picture of the workingwoman, toiling long hours in unhealthy conditions, in its condemnation of capitalist society. When accused of trying to unsex women, socialists replied that working-class women had never had the opportunity to be feminine.

Comrade Fannie Horovitz commented in the Call that the general argument that woman's place is in the home simply did not apply to the working class. "Have you men, ever ready to tell us our place is in the home, ever made any effort to keep us there?"[57] "At present," wrote May Wood Simons, "[woman] is occupying in the commercial world the position of downmost man."[58] Socialists charged that capitalism forced women and children into industry without regard for their health and happiness. In addition to the bitterness created by the low pay and long hours, industrial employment threatened the well-being of female workers, for it crippled woman's ability to bear children. The low wages paid women forced down the income of men. Working girls were easily lured into lives of prostitution to escape the circumstances created by meagre salaries.[59] "Capitalism," the socialists concluded, "is no respector of sex."[60]

Workingwomen occupied a unique position in socialist theory; socialists often claimed that the workingwoman in her role as breadwinner was in a position which the middle-class woman was still trying to attain.[61] In one sense, the factory girl was the ideal woman who would be emulated by others of her sex. Yet because both male and female workers were exploited by the capitalist class, the socialists proposed that workingwomen had more in common with their brothers by class than their sisters by sex. The "woman question" ceased to mean the treatment of all women suggested by the socialist explanation of woman's economic dependency. It referred instead to the condition of those women who belonged to the working class. The difference between the two positions -- whether socialist theory applied to women as a group or was dependent on class distinctions -- was only vaguely defined in socialist rhetoric. As long as the feminists played a role in party activities, the "unity of sex" was acknowledged in party propaganda. However, most party literature contended that workingwomen had special problems, which differed from those of their middle-class sisters and needed a special solution. The final aim of American socialism seems to have been the attainment of the feminine ideal of wife and mother for all women -- an equalization of the opportunity to be feminine. To achieve this, the party tried to split the woman movement along class lines, and when socialists organized workingwomen it was to secure socialism, not woman's liberation.

American socialists did not seem to understand the implications of their theories. Because they retained a belief in traditional womanhood, it was impossible for them to comprehend the drastic changes economic independence implied for the role of woman and the popular definition of "home" and "family." Although some feminists foresaw the changes, socialists continued to think that economic self-reliance would not alter the role of woman as mother. As an editorial in the New York Call summarized the socialist position, "Their [working-class women] demand can be nothing less than woman's economic and social equality with man, based upon a clear recognition of the fact that woman's position in society is essentially different from man's."[62] The conflict between the two parts of their solution to the woman question, their belief in economic independence, coupled with a traditional view of woman's role in society, precluded a socialist challenge to the social values of American life.

NOTES: CHAPTER II

[1] Meta L. Stern, "Introduction" to August Bebel, Woman and Socialism, trans. by Meta L. Stern, (New York, 1910), p. 3.

[2] Phillip Rappaport, Looking Forward; a Treatise on the Status of Woman and the Origin and Growth of the Family and the State (Chicago, 1906), p. 12.

[3] Algie M. Simons, "Review of Looking Forward; a Treatise on the Status of Woman and the Origin and Growth of the Family and the State," International Socialist Review, VII (1906), 123.

[4] Frederick Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works in One Volume (New York, 1968), pp. 455-593. Originally published in 1884, a translated edition was offered American socialists in 1902 by Charles H. Kerr Co., one of several socialist publishing houses. Most socialist theoretical studies were issued during the early years by the Kerr firm.

[5] Engels based his theories on the studies done in the 1870's by Lewis Henry Morgan, an American anthropologist. Morgan's works were also reprinted and publicized in the Socialist Party press, making Morgan one of the few non-Marxist social scientists to receive American Socialist recognition.

[6] Rappaport, Looking Forward, pp. 60-62.

[7] Gilman later denied her affilitation with the Socialist Party, saying she had always represented only the interests of women. See her autobiography, The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman (New York, 1935), p. 131. For references to Gilman's participation in Socialist Party activities see issues of the New York Call, 1908-1912. She was a frequent lecturer at socialist functions during these years, speaking generally about topics related to the woman question.

[8] Gilman wrote four more books in the ten years after the publication of Women and Economics, and, for a time edited a journal called the Forerunner. However, as Carl Degler has pointed out, her subsequent books only developed ideas already evident in Women and Economics. (Carl Degler, "Introduction" to Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Women and Economics [New York, 1966], p. xiii.)

[9] Gilman, Women and Economics, p. 63. The idea of woman as nonproductive consumer is used by Rappaport, p. 62. That woman's position in the world was determined by her relationship to a male

was expressed in an early socialist article by Hatti Titus, "Woman the Slave of the Wage Slave; Economic Independence, Her Only Salvation, Cannot Be Had Except through Socialism," Socialist (Seattle), May 5, 1901, pp. 1-2.

[10] Gilman, Women and Economics, pp. 49-52.

[11] Ibid., p. 46.

[12] August Bebel, Woman under Socialism, trans. by Daniel DeLeon (New York, 1904), p. 121. Bebel's book was published in Germany in 1883.

[13] Joseph E. Cohen, "Socialist Sociology," International Socialist Review, IX (1909), 875. Ellis said man's mind was naturally inductive, woman's deductive. (Man and Woman: a Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters [London, 1894], p. 176.) He thought that women held opinions more tenaciously than men, and were more ready to die for a statement or an opinion. "In this respect," he wrote, "women remain children..." (p. 185) Carpenter quoted Ellis to suggest that woman was nearer to a child and a savage. (Love's Coming of Age [Girard, Kansas, 1896], p. 23.) In spite of a feeling that he could reach no definite results about the intellectual differences between men and women, especially with regard to how far the differences reflect social and educational differences (p. 193), Ellis still felt that "So long as women are unlike [men] in the primary sexual characters and in reproductive function they can never be absolutely alike even in the highest psychic processes." (p. 17)

[14] Joseph E. Cohen, "Socialist Philosophy," International Socialist Review, X (1909), 966.

[15] See for example, Lida Parce, "Woman and the Socialist Philosophy; a Reply to Joseph E. Cohen," International Socialist Review, X (1909), 125-128.

[16] Josephine Conger-Kaneko, "Forget It," Progressive Woman, III (July, 1909), 12.

[17] Allen Benson, "A Letter to a Down-Hearted Woman...." Appeal to Reason, December 9, 1916, p. 1.

[18] Anna Mercy, "The Power of Woman," New York Call, August 1, 1908, p. 5.

[19] "Hebe," "The First Conference of the Socialist Women," New York Call, July 1, 1908, p. 2. "Hebe" was the pseudonym of Meta

Lilienthal Stern, New York socialist and translator of Bebel's *Woman and Socialism.* Her chosen name, Hebe, was a Greek goddess, daughter of Zeus and Hera. In Homer, Hebe is responsible for housework, and acts as a servant for other members of her household. "Hebe" was writing as a symbol of all women enslaved to the home.

[20] Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Home; its Work and Influence* (Urbana, Illinois, 1903), p. 87.

[21] Ellis, *Man and Woman*, pp. 369-370.

[22] Helen Untermann, "The Man and the Woman," *Progressive Woman*, III (January, 1910), 3.

[23] See for example, *ibid.*, or "Hebe," Veribus Unitus," *ibid.*, p. 7.

[24] Lida Parce, "The Relation of Socialism to the Woman Question," *International Socialist Review*, X (1909), 442-445.

[25] Vida Scudder, "Woman and Socialism," *Yale Review*, III (1914), 454-470.

[26] Eleanora Maurer, "What Women Can Do for Socialism; Letter to the Editor," *Socialist* (Seattle), July 19, 1903, p. 4.

[27] Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, p. 510.

[28] "Women under Socialism," *Appeal to Reason*, December 13, 1902, p. 1.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] Meta S. Lilienthal, *Woman of the Future* (New York, 1916), p. 22.

[31] See for example Kate Richards O'Hare, *The Sorrows of Cupid* (rev. and enl. ed.; St. Jouis, 1912).

[32] Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, p. 509.

[33] Rappaport, *Looking Forward*, p. 83. The same analysis is found in two popular socialist pamphlets: Meta S. Lilienthal, *From Fireside to Factory* (New York, 1916), and Theresa Malkiel, *Woman of Yesterday and Today* (New York, 1915).

[34] That the charge was common is illustrated by the frequent attempts by socialists to deny it. Caroline F. Corbin wrote in *Socialism and Christianity with Reference to the Woman Question* (Chicago, 1905), "Socialism, with its plan of turning women loose in the world, to share the burdens which Nature places upon the shoulders of men, to the neglect of their own inherent and inalienable rights and duties, and the destruction of the home, in the hope of banishing poverty from the world, is pulling down the roof-tree to boil the kitchen pot. It may work much evil for a generation or two and ruin many lives, but in the end will be seen the vindication of 'those sublime laws which have the heavens for their birth-place and God for their Author: which the dissolutions of mortal nature cannot destroy, nor time bury in oblivion, for the divinity is mighty within them and waxeth not old.'" (p. 31) Richard Hubbard in his venomous attack on socialism wrote: "The family as now known would cease to exist [in a socialist society] -- for all buildings would be common property, and families could remain in one house only as long as permitted by the Governing Committee.

"Leading socialists have demanded the abolition of the family, decrying it as the chief bulwark of capitalism, saying so long as husband and wife formed families with children, they had the motive to accumulate property or 'capital,' and the ultimate end of Socialism is to abolish private property. Another expression is that so long as a wife is dependent on a husband for support, she is a 'sex slave' and cannot leave him at her will and be sexually or economically free. To abolish this 'slavery' they propose to make all women 'economically free;' that is, that the Socialist State shall furnish all women with work independent from the home, and have her recompense separate and apart from the control of the husband.

"To this end they propose state nurseries for the infants, where the baby will get Socialistic state milk, in a Socialistic state bottle, administered by a state nurse. All this is done to liberate the mother from 'sex slavery,' that she may not depend on the father of her child for support. This is done to destroy the 'family,' which is, in the Socialists' view, an institution established by religion to promote capitalism." (*Socialism, Feminism, and Suffragism, the Terrible Triplets* [Chicago, 1915], p. 16.)

[35] Gilman, *The Home*, p. 3.

[36] A. M. Simons, "Capitalism and the Home," *Appeal to Reason*, August 16, 1902, p. 2.

[37] Examples of this type of reporting can be found in almost any issue of the New York *Call*, 1908-1917. The subject was editorialized in the January 16, 1911 *Call*, "A Mother's Love, p. 6.

[38] H. G. Wells, in a 1906 article in the *Independent*, pointed out that in the United States the socialist assault on the family was

ignored by socialists. ("Socialism and the Family," Independent, LXI [1906], 1025-1028.)

[39] Laurence Gronlund, The Cooperative Commonwealth in its Outlines: an Exposition of Modern Socialism (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1884), p. 181.

[40] Ibid.,

[41] Ibid., p. 183.

[42] Charles H. Vail, Modern Socialism (New York, 1897), pp. 133-136; Principles of Scientific Socialism (Chicago, 1908), pp. 84-86.

[43] John Spargo, Applied Socialism; a Study of the Application of the Socialistic Principles to the State (New York, 1912), p. 269.

[44] Lester F. Ward, Dynamic Sociology (New York, 1883), I, 658.

[45] John Spargo, Socialism and Motherhood (New York, 1914), p. 11; p. 25. E. N. Richardson wrote in the Appeal to Reason ("Woman under Capitalism," April 2, 1904, p. 2): "Woman -- the complete woman -- the woman who is living the life for which nature qualified her, the woman who is living the life that every truly and thoroughly womanly woman is ambitious to live, is a mother and in her own home."

[46] Spargo, Applied Socialism, p. 274. A movement to pension widows with dependent children was begun during the Progressive period. By 1914, twenty-one states had some system of support, ostensibly for the purpose of allowing mothers to remain at home with the children. The idea of pensioning widows was extended by some socialists to include pensions to all mothers, since "motherhood is still woman's most valued service to society," and the state pensioned its soldiers, why not its mothers? (See Lilienthal, Woman of the Future, p. 30.) Government pensions for widowed mothers did not become part of the party's national platform until 1916.

[47] Spargo, Applied Socialism, p. 274.

[48] Morris Hillquit, Socialism in Theory and Practice (New York, 1912), p. 235.

[49] Lida Parce Robinson, "'Doing Things' with Woman under Socialism" Socialist Woman, II (May, 1908), 2; Bell Oury, "Woman's Relation to Society," Progressive Woman, IV (June, 1910), 7. See also Georgia Kotsch, "The Mother's Future," International Socialist Review, X

(1910), 1097-1101, for a critique of the typical socialist view of the condition of married women under socialism. Kotsch wrote, "Thus the vocation of wife and mother would render an independent woman dependent upon one man and this is innocently supposed to be an inducement to her to marry. Could anyone but a man have written that!" (p. 1098)

[50] Henry May, The End of American Innocence; a Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917 (Chicago, 1959), pp. 307-308.

[51] June Sochen, The New Woman in Greenwich Village, 1910-1920 (New York, 1972), p. 5.

[52] George B. Foster, "The Philosophy of Feminism," Forum and Century, LII (July, 1914), 18.

[53] See for example, Josephine Conger-Kaneko, "Socialism and the Sex War," New York Call, August 4, 1909, p. 5. In this article, it is explained that the sex struggle would have a deeper significance than the class struggle, since the position of woman is the pivot of the whole society. If her position were altered, the whole structure would tumble.

[54] Anna Mercy, "The Power of Woman," New York Call, August 1, 1908, p. 5. See also Conger-Kaneko, ibid., where it was suggested that the Socialist Party was the natural place for feminists. "It is a matter of the movement recognizing and explaining it [the sex struggle] as it recognizes and explains the class struggle."

[55] Gronlund, The Cooperative Commonwealth, p. 184.

[56] Carrie W. Allen, "The Neglected Factor -- Woman," New York Call, January 23, 1912, p. 6.

[57] Fannie Horovitz, "Taxation without Representation," New York Call, September 19, 1908, p. 5.

[58] May Wood Simons, Woman and the Social Question, Pocket Library of Socialism, No. 1 (Chicago, 1899), p. 18.

[59] Rappaport, Looking Forward, p. 85.

[60] Wood Simons, Woman and the Social Question, p. 18.

[61] Beulah B. Hyde, "Wives Revolutionary," Socialist (Seattle), November 13, 1909, p. 4.

[62] "Woman's Day," (editorial), New York Call, February 26, 1910, p. 8.

CHAPTER III

The Woman's National Committee: The Fortunes of the Socialist Woman Movement

American socialists admitted that arguments about work for women and means to ensure economic independence were utopian issues.[1] They believed that social problems like the woman question would not be settled until the advent of the socialist order. Because the Socialist Party never controlled the government, it was never necessary to create tactics to make the dream of a socialist future a reality. Since changes in the social structure to safeguard equality for women would not be accomplished until the entire nation was a socialist community, the actions of local socialist governments gave little indication of the party's attitude towards the woman question. However, their beliefs were reflected in two areas -- in the party's internal organization, and in the socialists' relationship to the woman suffrage movement.

As the Socialist movement in the United States developed into a recognized political party, it had to designate groups of potential supporters so that its political appeal would win the largest possible rewards. Naturally, the main thrust of the party's effort was directed towards the workers, but it did not limit itself to this group. Since the status of women in capitalist societies was an integral part of socialist ideology, it was anticipated that women would be drawn into the socialist camp. As a political organization, the Socialist Party's attempts to involve women should have enlarged the scope of its appeal, but it was never able to resolve its dilemma over the "unity of sex."

In its demands for the vote, the woman movement pictured females as a group united by the fact of their womanhood; all women were equally oppressed because all women shared certain biological characteristics. The Socialist Party agreed that women were economically oppressed, and that socialism would liberate all of them, even the "bridge-whist brigades."[2] But socialists questioned if the party should try to recruit women (most of whom were only potential voters) as a group, simply because they were women. If not, the party needed to draw class lines within the woman movement and to appeal only to workingwomen and workers' wives. Their theoretical explanation of the woman question offered little guidance for practical application, since it made both distinctions. In 1910, the party committed itself to special treatment of women as a group; a woman's bureau was created to act as a clearinghouse for socialist work among women. Failing to follow through with the initial commitment, the party allowed the bureau to flounder for five years without funds or authority, until it was abolished by national consensus. The party then resumed its belief that no group deserved special recognition, since all oppression could be reduced to a common economic denominator. Instead of altering its theory to accommodate the special interests of women, the party withdrew into an ideological shell, leaving the radical woman movement in political isolation.

Marxist theory ascribed to women no particular role in the revolution. Although somewhat inconsistent with the belief that the emancipation of the workers had to be accomplished by the oppressed class itself, equality was to be granted to women after the socialist victory. The need to organize women to participate in socialist activities was not immediately apparent, especially in the early years of party activity, when women could vote in only four states.[3] In spite of the neglect, women did join the organization. As one woman remarked, socialists formed the only party which offered anything at all to women, since from the party's birth, its campaign platforms had always included the demand for equal suffrage.[4]

Although the party appeared to sanction equal rights, women were never a numerically significant factor in Socialist Party membership. From a 1909 questionnaire sent to party locals, it was ascertained that approximately 5% of the dues-paying members were women.[5] The socialist women, after special efforts to recruit members of their sex, estimated the figure at 10% of the party's membership.[6] By party figures, then, women formed a small part of the total membership. Those women who did join the party came from several geographic and economic sections of the population: from the native American protestant middle class; the prairie farm and western frontier sections; or the urban-oriented immigrant working class.[7] Many were college-educated professional women, especially those belonging to large urban branches. However, in 1909, two-thirds of the women responding to the party questionnaire listed "housewife" when an occupation was requested.[8] Just as with men, socialism appealed to women with a wide range of interests and backgrounds.

Women who actually became party members did not represent only one element of the population.

Conditions for membership in the Socialist Party never contained a qualification based on sex; women were welcome to join, but until 1908, no special attention was given to their recruitment. During these early years women did participate in party functions, often holding·influential positions out of proportion to the numbers they represented. Eight women attended the 1901 Unity Convention as regularly elected delegates; seven came as state delegates to the 1904 Presidential convention.[9] However these women participated as socialists; they were not representing women as one group of a socialist political coalition. Only the equal suffrage plank and the motion to prohibit smoking indicated that socialist conventions recognized a special woman problem.[10]

The party's attitude was tolerant but not encouraging to the average women who wished to participate. No efforts were made to accommodate a woman's sense of propriety, since many locals met in saloons, and socialist men often did not urge their wives to join the party.[11] Because they were not encouraged to participate in socialist organizations, some women looked for an alternate means to express their socialist leanings, often forming associations outside the party structure. Although socialist in sympathy, members of these associations were not necessarily dues-paying party members, and the clubs were only indirectly related to party locals. As early as 1900 a Socialist Women's Society was founded in Chicago, to develop class-conscious women by working for equal suffrage, equal pay for equal work, and an equal right to interests other than home and family.[12] A Woman's Study Club was organized in Tacoma, Washington to promote the understanding of "social economics."[13] In both Philadelphia and New York, socialist woman's organizations studied the "economic question,"[14] while in Omaha, a Woman's Socialist Union was founded in 1903 to "interest women in their own emancipation from wage-slavery."[15] A national committee to unite the various groups, the Woman's National Socialist Union (WNSU), was soon established, and as one writer noted somewhat later, like it or not, a separate organization of socialist women had come into existence.[16]

The Socialist Party did not approve; it emphatically objected to the existence of socialist groups outside its jurisdiction. In 1904, when the WNSU met for its first convention (at the same time as the party's convention to nominate its candidate for President), objections were raised concerning the legitimacy of the union. May Wood Simons, one of the founders of the Chicago Socialist Women's Society, was by that time convinced that separate socialist women's groups were disruptive. She told the WNSU convention that the union had been created by a group of women dissatisfied with party policy. By withdrawing to form a rival organization the WNSU threatened the precarious party unity which had only recently been achieved.

Members present at the WNSU convention thought that Simons was misinformed about the organization's goals. The Union was not formed to compete with the party in its appeal to women. It was created to serve a special need -- to educate women not quite ready for participation in party locals. The WNSU saw itself as a stepping-stone to party affiliation. After an "intensely interesting discussion" of Simons' address, the convention passed the following resolution: "Moved that the separate organization of women is conducive to the good of the Socialist cause, tends to upbuild the party organization, and must be done if the sex is not to be a drag when the Cooperative Commonwealth is initiated."[17] The decision to maintain separate organizations was a move to ensure that women as a group received special acknowledgment by the socialist movement.

Writing in the Appeal to Reason, a socialist weekly published in Kansas, a WNSU member had argued in 1903, a year before the convention, that separate organizations offered four advantages over direct participation in the party. They promoted an interest in socialism among women workers, and brought new members to the party. Socialist woman's groups could also influence the woman suffrage campaign. Most important to this writer, however, was the power a separate organization possessed to win from the party a recognition of the woman question.[18] Separate organizations were to be used to increase the party's awareness of the distinct needs of women as a separate group.

Simons accused the women who favored separate organizations of being dilettantes, pointing out that organizational work of consequence could only be accomplished through regular party channels. The WNSU was victorious in 1904, but its convention debate had been only a skirmish. The party as a whole was not yet ready to consider its responsibilities to special interest groups, and the issue of separate organizations for women was not raised at the Socialist national convention. The woman suffrage plank was passed by the delegates without opposition, but the party's own peculiar woman question was far from resolved.

The years 1904 to 1908 marked a turning point in the history of the American Socialist Party. By 1908 the party was aware of a need to appeal to women. Within the socialist movement, women were organizing into separate groups, even to the extent of segregated locals, and outside the party, the woman suffrage movement was developing a new spirit of militancy.[19] At the same time, the Socialist Party had matured as a political organization, shedding most of its nineteenth-century sectarian characteristics. It had reached the point where social issues, such as woman's rights, could become a part of the organization's political ammunition.

Suffragists referred to the early years of the twentieth century as "the doldrums." From 1896 to 1910 no new state was won for woman suffrage and the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) was languishing in organizational disputes. In 1906, Harriot Stanton Blatch, the daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, returned from England and resolved to rescue the lifeless movement. Imbued with the spirit of the British suffragettes, Blatch helped to organize in January, 1907, the New York City Equality League for Self-Supporting Women.[20] The Equality League adopted tactics radically different from the placid petitioning of legislatures used by the NAWSA. To attract attention to the cause of votes for women, it initiated street meetings and suffrage parades.[21] Of greater significance however, was the League's attempt to interest labor unions in suffrage activities.[22]

Since the working class was then the avowed constituency of the Socialist Party, it occurred to some members that if workingwomen were going to agitate for the ballot, this energy should be harnessed for party ends.[23]

An event within the world-wide socialist movement also helped turn the party's attention towards the woman question. The Second International, to which the American Socialist Party belonged, congregated in the summer of 1907, at Stuttgart, Germany. Although the most pressing problem was the socialist stand in the event of war, the Congress did devote some time to a speech advocating equal rights, and a resolution declaring the socialists' support for the enfranchisement of women. The resolution committed socialists to "agitation for the democratization of the franchise," including votes for women, while stipulating that socialist women should reject alliances with middle-class woman suffragists.[24]

Stuttgart provided some of the necessary incentive to encourage the party to consider the role of women in the socialist cause, however, the shift in party attitude was also related to its changing political position. In spite of its small membership, the Socialist Party was considered a force on the American political scene, especially by its members, but also by its opponents. As intellectuals and wealthy individuals were attracted to the party, the organization lost its sinister, anarchistic reputation; by 1908, it was a political party anticipating significant electoral victories. The changed character was reflected in the party's emphasis on social issues at its 1908 national convention.

A spirit of optimism pervaded the Presidential convention; membership had doubled since the last meeting and it was assumed that the vote would increase accordingly. At previous conventions a system of committees elected by the delegates at large had been used to establish party policy for the ensuing four years. Committees on the platform, the party constitution, and finances were axiomatic. Indicative of the change in party attitude, however, was the formation in 1908 of several unprecedented special committees: one to formulate a farm program, a committee on immigration, one to investigate the position of foreign-speaking socialist organizations, and a committee to consider the relationship of women to the Socialist Party.[25] Each represented the party's attempt to accommodate the aspirations of a group of potential allies. Nine delegates (eight women, one man) were elected by the convention to consider the party's woman question. After policy sessions throughout the week, the committee presented its report midway through the afternoon session on the last day of the convention. Despite the late hour, and amicable spirit once the party's candidate had been chosen, the committee's majority report faced stiff opposition, although it was eventually passed by a vote of 70 to 35.[26]

The majority report provided for a committee, responsible to the party's executive body, to conduct a special program for women. The party agreed to supply a woman organizer (one who would direct her efforts towards organizing women within the party) while the Woman's National Committee (WNC) would raise all other funds necessary to carry out its assignment.[27] The assumption behind the move was stated in the WNC's report to the party's 1910 convention:

> The only reason we advocate special methods for propaganda among women is the fact that those of us who have many years experience in actual work among women, both on the industrial and political field, have come to the conclusion that the general make-up of woman's trend of thought, of her interests and sympathies, is, at least for the present, greatly different from that of the man, which does not mean that it is inferior.[28]

This argument took the ideas socialists accepted about woman's personality and turned them around to justify special attention from the party. The women on the Woman's National Committee were suggesting that although not all people could be reached by the same propaganda, all should belong to the same organization. The result was a compromise between the independent organizations and a party which rebelled at the notion of feminist "sex consciousness."

Although the majority report was adopted in 1908, a dissenting opinion was also presented. Laura D. Payne, delegate from Texas and a state organizer, offered the convention a minority report, completely opposed to the principles of majority. Payne argued that the socialist movement represented the working class regardless of sex; she felt that as an organizer she did not have time to make distinctions between men and women workers. "It is contended by some," she declared, "that women, because of their disenfranchisement and because of their economic dependence on men, bear a different relationship to the socialist movement from that of men. That is not so. The economic dependence of our men, women and children -- whether to a greater or less extent -- can be traced to the same cause, which socialism will alone remove."[29]

The point of contention between the minority and majority reports concerned the party's woman suffrage pledge. Aware of both the Stuttgart resolution and the revitalized suffrage movement, the socialists included in their 1908 platform a pledge to work actively to gain the vote for women. Payne and her supporters argued that since a woman suffrage organization already existed, the socialist suffrage campaign would be needlessly duplicating efforts.[30] As one delegate defined the difference between the two views, "It is, do we intend to do something for woman suffrage, or do we intend to wait until socialism comes?"[31]

The issue raised at the 1908 convention, the relationship of women to the party, questioned the validity of special recognition by the socialists of a group not based on class lines. By accepting the majority report the party was accepting the view that women, because they were women, formed an oppressed group. The terms of their oppression were not restricted by class affiliation. If nothing else, their disenfranchisement made women a unified group. The party, in its suffrage pledge, agreed to support the immediate demand of this group, just as it sought the eight-hour day for workers, as a group. May Wood Simons, one of the authors of the majority report, noted that eleven years earlier she probably would have agreed with Payne, but at present, special action was necessary to make the Socialist Party a credible representative of the oppressed.[32]

With the passage of the majority report, the Socialist Party committed itself to a special program to organize women within the party. It ignored in the convention debate, the separate organizations of socialist women which already existed, in favor of a party-controlled program to induce women to participate in the movement. Socialist women were to be integrated into the party's structure; even segregated locals were discouraged, although the independent organizations reported that many women felt uncomfortable in mixed locals.[33] While rebuffing separate organizations, the party did acknowledge the unique situation of women, through its advocacy of special appeal based on sex, not class.

Following the recommendations of the majority report, the convention elected a committee of five women to coordinate the party's appeal to women. This Woman's National Committee was at first a temporary body, although in 1910 it was made a permanent committee of seven members, responsible to the party's governing body, the National Executive Committee. In addition, a Woman's Bureau was organized at party headquarters in Chicago, directed by a general correspondent who was responsible for the overall operation of the WNC's activities.[34] The work of the WNC was originally financed by contributions from members, with the sale of special stamps being a popular method of raising funds. The funding scheme was revised in 1910, when the party assumed financial responsibility for the work of the Woman's Bureau and the WNC.[35]

The Woman's Bureau and the WNC were given two tasks: to attract women to the Socialist Party (at the expense of the independent woman's organizations), and to arouse an uninterested party to an awareness of the woman question. The woman's committee members became mediators between women outside the party and the socialist men and women within; they had to explain why women should become socialists, and why socialists should direct efforts towards securing immediate demands for women. The assignment was not an easy one for the women elected to the WNC. They faced the opposition of a significant portion of the party, initially expressed in Laura Payne's minority report, and they had only the resentful support of the formerly independent women's organizations.[36] To achieve its goals the WNC concentrated on two areas: the creation of a socialist literature presenting the woman question in socialist terms, and the establishment of a plan of work for party locals which would encourage women to become members.

Until the Woman's Bureau began operations, literature directed to women was quite inadequate to stimulate a mass appeal. John Spargo, in his 1908 article calling for the formation of a woman's committee, had noted the poor quality of the literature which did exist.[37] Prior to that time, socialist women resorted either to European material or to relatively unsophisticated discussions such as May Walden Kerr's Socialism and the Home. Amateurish in its approach, the Kerr pamphlet was scarcely suited to the needs of the woman's committee and the European works, although studied by some women's groups, were considered too difficult for the uninitiated.[38]

To meet the literature needs created by the new emphasis on women in the party, the WNC initiated publication of several leaflets designed to explain the woman question in socialist terms. However, their original plans were hampered by the censorship power the National Executive Committee (NEC) maintained over WNC activities. Before publication, all drafts accepted by the woman's committee had to be approved by the NEC, and approval was not necessarily automatic. This was discovered when one of the WNC members, A.M. Simons, protested that the phrase "sex struggle" was inappropriate in "socialist" literature. The pamphlet, "Sex and Class," was passed despite Simons' objections, however, by 1910, the woman's committee could report the addition of only two new leaflets to the party press.[39] The situation improved somewhat after the party removed the restrictions on the WNC's right to edit its own materials, and after 1910, an array of leaflets was published, designed to appeal to women of all classes.[40]

The WNC leaflets tried to restate in elementary language the party's position as formulated in its more theoretical literature. Emphasis was still placed on woman as wife and mother, although leaflets were careful to point out that women would not be forbidden to work in the Cooperative Commonwealth.[41] One important goal of the literature was to relate socialist economics to domestic activities. Victor Berger's appeal, "Madam, How Will You Feed Your Family" was typical of this approach. In it Berger drew the connection between the rising cost of food prices and the privately owned food trusts. "How do you manage to make ends meet with the money you get?" Berger challenged the reader. The rising cost of food prices, he assumed, was the one area in which women could comprehend the economics of socialism. Implicit in his appeal is the image of woman as consumer. "And do you know the reason for this ungodly rise in the means of livelihood?" Berger continued. "It is because everything is in the hands of a few TRUSTS." The only solution to the trusts would be a socialist economy. Berger's conclusion: If the housewife agreed with Berger's analysis she should see that her husband or grown-up son read some socialist literature.[42]

In "Our National Kitchen," first a lecture topic and later published in pamphlet form, Anna Maley offered a similar analogy, comparing the national economy to the functions of feeding a family.[43] Elizabeth H. Thomas, Wisconsin state party secretary, succinctly characterized this facet of the WNC literature. "The Socialist movement will never triumph until it reaches the wives of the workingmen...," she wrote in the New York Call. They could be reached, Thomas felt, only through "the privations of the family," the one subject about which women were knowledgeable. Abstract economic theory, Thomas thought, was meaningless to the wives of laborers.[44]

The discussions in the pamphlets of both Berger and Maley suggested only that socialism would make the job of being a housewife easier. However, some literature proposed to alter the role of housewife and to eliminate the drudgery of housework. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's notions of socialized housekeeping, which would free women from the need to perform chores in the home, found expression in at least one WNC leaflet, "To Wives of Toilers," by Meta Stern.[45] Socialized housekeeping would have allowed women time to develop individual capabilities and perform work for society. The author of this pamphlet, Meta Stern, was a product of the socialist movement in New York City, where feminists played an influential role in party activity. During the years in which the Woman's National Committee controlled the party's appeal to women, both views of womanhood found expression in socialist literature.

The WNC literature was to be used to encourage women to join the Socialist Party. Consequently its appeal focused on what socialism could offer women. Very little was written for male readers, to make them aware of the inequalities women suffered. The original purpose of the woman's committee -- to increase awareness of the woman question both within and outside the party - - was sacrificed to the desire to enlarge the membership figures. In 1913, the Progressive Woman, a journal devoted to providing a socialist analysis of the woman question, began a drive to increase the number of women socialists to 50% of the total membership.[46] The editor's campaign suggests that socialist women assumed that equality of numbers would bring equality of treatment.[47]

The problem of increasing membership belonged to the locals. The national party could supply literature, but it fell to the individual branches to make a place in the party for women, and at this level the party failed to put its equalitarian theory into practice. It has already been noted that membership did not appreciably increase throughout the years of WNC activity. The fault lay less with the activity of the women than the recalcitrance of the local members. While socialists were quick to recognize in their literature the uniquely feminine sensibilities of women, the locals demanded strict equality. Women were allowed to participate in party activities but they must not ask the party to accommodate their sense of acceptable conduct. This male attitude had initially forced women to form separate organizations, to allow the uninitiated to develop a feeling of confidence when faced with parliamentary procedure and theoretical discussions.

With the increased consciousness of the woman question reflected in the 1908 convention and the decision to integrate the separate organizations into the party bureacuracy, the party's ability to compromise its "masculine" atmosphere became a crucial issue for socialist women. Appealing to women intellectually was only one part of the battle; the local had to offer an inviting spirit to encourage women to participate. It was proposed that the structure used at the national level be the pattern for the local integration of women into the party. Each local was to create its own woman's committee to coordinate its appeal to women. All local woman's committees would channel activities into a state committee, which in turn reported to the WNC. In all cases, the woman's committee was under the supervision of the state office, to ensure harmony and to counter ever present charges of attempts to form separate organizations which would draw support from the party. States were encouraged to engage a woman organizer, just as the National Office had employed an organizer responsible for woman's activities.[48]

On paper, the plan looked quite functional; however, it is through reports from women organizers, and letters to editors of socialist periodicals that the plan's failure became evident. In 1910, the general correspondent of the Woman's Bureau undertook a survey of women in party locals. Of the 199 locals responding (out of over 3,000) only 44 reported the formation of woman's committees. These figures were acceptable in the fall of 1910, but by the summer of 1911, with returns received from less than half the state organizations, the disillusionment was pronounced. The correspondent reported that she had no idea how many woman's committees had been organized.[49] By not replying to the WNC's requests, the locals made virtually impossible any nationally coordinated program for women. Locals were left to their own devices to see that the number of women members increased.

Soon after the creation of the special committee for women, the party press began to register complaints about uncooperative party locals. The woman's correspondent of the Seattle *Socialist* noted among the male party members a lack of enthusiasm for organizing women. She also reported that the Washington organization had allotted no funds for a state woman's committee.[50] Across the country, in a letter to the *Call* signed by "a mere woman," the lack of consideration and patronizing manner in New York locals was found deplorable. While the editor of the *Call* objected to the correspondent's charges, a series of letters in succeeding issues of the *Call* agreed that most socialist men needed to be considerably enlightened.[51] The patronizing attitude complained of by a "mere woman" was reflected in a proposed constitutional amendment which would have allowed women (not engaged in gainful occupation) to pay dues 1/3 the amount charged men. The WNC objected that the amendment was "foreign to the ideal of equality and comradeship and not in harmony with the spirit of the Socialist Party."[52] Individual socialists seemed incapable of putting into practice the ideals of the national party.

Equally damning were the reports of women organizers. Anna A.

Maley, the party's first national woman's organizer, noted that it was difficult to keep male comrades interested in socialist programs directed towards women.[53] In 1912, the organizer for the Woman's Committee of the local in New York City complained of "passive opposition," and "indifference" to her work among the comrades and "lukewarm support" from the governing bodies.[54] Although the New York City branches immediately instituted a propaganda committee to appeal to women, not until 1913 did the New York state organization establish a state woman's committee, and then announcing that the request was "acquiesced to" only as long as work and functions were defined by the state committee.[55]

At issue was the committee's autonomy. The party wanted to maintain control over the actions of the woman's committee while at the same time allowing the office to direct the party's appeal to women. The party's relationship to the WNC bears similarities to the type of marriage (and the corresponding position of women) it supposedly abhorred. The women could operate a program as long as it did not conflict with the party's set of priorities. The woman question had to be subordinate to socialism.

Since the WNC was not economically independent, one major irritant was finances. Funds for the committee, always a critical question, were used eventually as an excuse to abolish the Woman's Bureau and its leadership, the Women's National Committee. The separate woman's organizations had been financially self-supporting, and, when the initial WNC was established, it too was responsible for finding its own money. Although the party paid for a woman's organizer, it financed no other WNC activities. With the creation of the Woman's Bureau as part of the National Office, the party assumed the financial responsibilties of the WNC. Initially this move provided the bureau with more opportunities to appeal to women, and was favorably greeted by the WNC. However, the cooperation continued only as long as funds were readily available.

By 1913, the national party had accumulated a large debt, coupled with falling revenue: Dues-paying membership declined in the years after 1912, from an all time high of 118,000, to between 70,000 and 80,000 throughout the World War I period. A deficit of $18,000 was recorded in mid-year and a reorganization of the national office was suggested to ease the crisis. "The problem of budget-making is something new to the Socialist Party," a New York Call columnist remarked. He hoped that the plan to keep the spending of the different departments down to "actual necessities" would put the party on firm financial footing before the 1914 Congressional campaigns.[56]

One of the first areas hit by the financial squeeze was the Woman's Bureau. Because of the deficit, tours by women organizers were discontinued.[57] No meeting of the WNC was permitted in 1914, although the expenses of a National Executive Committee meeting were absorbed by the budget. Throughout 1914, woman's propaganda activities were curtailed, until out of resentment and frustration, the WNC decided to force the party to reevaluate its program for women.

In January, 1915, May Wood Simons, the chairwoman of the first WNC, resigned from the committee on which she had participated from its formation. Her letter of explanation stated:

> I am resigning from the National Woman's Committee because for the past year its efforts to be of any use to the Party have been continuously hindered by the officials of the Party, on the plea of lack of funds. The Committee was informed soon after the election that it would do no good to pass any motions if the expenditure of money were involved as they could not be carried out. Now that the Committee has, thus hampered, been able to do little it is described as an "expensive ornament" of the Party....
>
> It is now charged that this Committee is useless. That may be true, but its uselessness has been largely due to the attitude of the Party which has been such that its duly elected committee could not do their work. A retrenchment is to be started and the woman's work is considered by the Executive Committee or at least some members of it as the place to begin. I am contending that if this attitude is taken by the Socialist Party that in the face of the large number of women voters that now exist, the Party is placing itself in a dangerous position....
>
> It should be borne in mind that not only has the present Executive Committee refused to allow the women to meet although it has repeatedly met itself at large expense and a light result to the Party, but it has refused to vote on the various matters brought to it by the Woman's Committee for endorsement. This does not augur well for the interest among women if it is left entirely in their hands....[58]

Simons' resignation gave notice that once again a decision had to be made concerning the relationship of women to the Socialist Party.

Other members of the WNC concurred with the accusations made by Simons, charging that the National Executive Committee "blocked every effort" of the WNC. The Committee objected to the close scrutiny of their activities. While they acknowledged the financial difficulties of the party, the women noted that "discontinuance of propaganda is a poor way to replenish a treasury."[59] But they chose not to resign. It was commonly known that the future of the Woman's Bureau would be decided at the May meeting of the National Committee, and the WNC wished to attend to see that its views were represented.[60] Between January and May, the letters to the editor of the American

Socialist, the party's official newsletter, reverberated with charges of party indifference to the woman question and talk of an "autocratic bureaucracy."[61]

The crisis came in May. As in 1908, majority and minority reports were presented to the assembled delegates. And, as in 1908, the majority report stressed the need for a special appeal to women. More autonomy was the report's theme. Financial independence and representation on the National Executive Committee were proposed as a means to combat the "compulsory inactivity" of the Woman's Bureau. The report stressed the importance of reaching women with the message of socialism just when the sex was about to be enfranchised.[62] This time, however, the minority report was accepted by the party. Like the minority of 1908, the 1915 report did not want women to remain outside the party, but it felt that women could be reached by a propaganda appeal that was not substantially different from the appeal to men. Other departments, it was suggested, could better handle the functions of the Woman's Bureau, and the WNC did not merit continuation.[63]

Summarizing the events of the meeting, an article in the American Socialist noted that the WNC reports "brought forth much discussion." It was generally believed that the powers requested by the woman's committee would have placed it on par with the NEC, creating the intolerably chaotic situation of an executive committee for men and an equally powerful one for women.[64] The meeting resulted in a decision to abolish both the Woman's Bureau and the Woman's National Committee. In its place a special fund was to be set aside for propaganda among women, to be directed by the Executive Secretary (the highest official) of the party. To take effect the plan had to receive approval from the membership at large, done by a party referendum. The plan for propaganda among women was included in the referendum which dealt with all proposed constitutional amendments, and received final approval in August.[65]

The special effort to attract women to the Socialist Party ended in 1915 with the abolition of the Woman's National Committee. Among the women who felt betrayed by the party, it was half-heartedly suggested that all along the party had planned to demolish the socialist woman's movement. By first discrediting the independent socialist woman's organizations and then abandoning the replacement Woman's Bureau, "every avenue of woman's work within the party" was shut off.[66] Proposals were made to allow for proportional representation of women in the party governing bodies, and at least one leader implored the members to put a woman on the seven-member National Executive Committee in 1916.[67] In that year, the party did elect Anna A. Maley to the NEC, but the proportional representation motion died with no action taken.

That the WNC had been a plot to discredit the socialist woman movement was not seriously believed, but it was generally acknowledged that something had gone wrong with the party's attitude.[68] The cost of woman's work was only the immediate excuse for disbanding the special program for women. As the women themselves pointed out, other departments of the party were left intact, notably the Foreign Language Federations. Actually, in this period the autonomy of the immigrant organizations increased rather than declined. This refuted one of the party's explanations, that it had reached the stage of development when a nationally coordinated policy being desirous, greater centralization of authority was necessary. Put succinctly by John M. Work, the argument suggested that woman's committees "promoted scatteration, whereas our movement is sadly in need of coordination."[69] Probably the charges against the woman's committee were true: it did disperse the decision-making power, and the WNC was moving towards a demand for greater autonomy. But the decision to centralize authority was applied most vigorously against the woman movement. Other actions by the party suggested that more centralization was not the goal.[70]

The decision to abolish the WNC does reflect the party's attitude toward the woman question. Social equality and economic independence for women would be granted after the socialists made the political revolution. Since socialists expected that the revolution would be accomplished in a short time, the special efforts to convert women seemed useless.[71] In a sense the WNC was an aberration; one woman observed later that its creation had been an act of chivalry.[72] The aim of the committee, to increase the party's awareness of the woman question by increasing the total female membership, was never fully supported by the Socialist Party, since the WNC appeared to represent the interest of the sex, rather than the class.

The women who formed the Woman's National Committee would scarcely have considered themselves feminists. The WNC represented a compromise between socialists who denied that women, even workingwomen, had unique problems unrelated to their class status, and an emerging feminist ideology which tried to emphasize the common interests of all women. Even the arguments of the WNC were based not on feminist arguments of equal treatment, but on arguments about woman's special nature, her special method of thinking and her special interests. Implicit in this argument, however, was the assumption that if the woman question could be solved by socialism, women as a group belonged in the Socialist Party, even if a special propaganda was needed to encourage them. The party decision in 1915 said in effect that if women could not be reached by the standard socialist class appeal, then women as a group did not belong in the Socialist Party. It was not, as some women in the party assumed, that equality could be attained only by scorning special treatment and special organization in the Socialist Party. Local Canton, Illinois, in a letter to the American Socialist, spelled out the defeat of the Woman's Bureau when it wrote, "We want class consciousness not sex consciousness."[73] By 1915, it seemed to a majority of American socialists that the two were incompatible.

NOTES: CHAPTER III

[1] John Spargo, Socialism: a Summary and Interpretation of Socialist Principles (2nd ed., rev.; New York, 1909), p. 277.

[2] "Bridge-whist brigade" was a socialist epithet for those middle-class and upper-class women who spent their afternoons at socially useless activities such as teas or card parties. (Theresa Malkiel, "The Bridge-Whist Brigade," New York Call, September 13, 1909, p. 5.)

[3] Women were granted the vote in only four western states before 1900: Colorado (1893), Utah and Idaho (1896), and Wyoming (women were given the vote in 1869 when Wyoming was still a territory; with statehood, in 1890, Wyoming women continued to be voters). No further states were won until Washington passed a suffrage referendum in 1910.

[4] Ida Crouch Hazlett, "Socialism and Women." New York Call, April 14, 1910, p. 5. Until 1916, neither of the two major national parties included a demand for woman suffrage in their election platforms. In addition to the socialists, only the Prohibition Party consistently supported votes for women. The Progressive Party, in 1912, also added a suffrage plank to its platform.

[5] "Minutes of the National Executive Committee Meeting," Socialist Party Official Bulletin, April 10, 1909, p. 2. (Hereafter cited as SPOB.)

[6] Socialist Party, Proceedings of the National Convention of the Socialist Party (Chicago, 1912), p. 205. (Hereafter cited as Proceedings of the 1912 Convention.)

[7] James Weinstein, The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925 (New York, 1967), p. 54. Socialist men came from the same classes; women in the party were not from an unique socio-economic group. Many women leaders were married to men who also held positions of importance within the party.

[8] "Minutes of the National Executive Committee Meeting," SPOB, April 10, 1909, p. 2.

[9] Proceedings of the 1912 Convention, p. 204; Socialist Party, Proceedings of the National Convention of the Socialist Party (Chicago, 1904), pp. 301-304, p. 72. (Hereafter cited as Proceedings

of the 1904 Convention.) The seven women who participated in 1904 represented about 4% of the delegates in attendance.

[10] Proceedings of the 1904 Convention, pp. 18-19.

[11] John Spargo, "Woman and the Socialist Movement," International Socialist Review, VIII (February, 1908), 449-455. (Hereafter cited as ISR.) "Where is Your Wife?" an article written for the Socialist Woman by its publisher, Kiichi Kaneko, was reprinted as a pamphlet for distribution in socialist locals. Kaneko wrote that socialist men, on an individual basis, had neglected to encourage women to participate in the socialist movement. "In the present day," he stated, "we find the churches filled with women, and the socialist meeting places filled with men. We call the effeminized church abnormal. Why not then call the masculine locals abnormal?" (Socialist Woman, I [August, 1907], 5.)

[12] Robert S. Huston, "A. M. Simons and the American Socialist Movement" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1965), p. 220.

[13] Ida Mudgett, "Letter to the Editor," Socialist (Seattle), August 24, 1902, p. 4.

[14] Jessie M. Molle, "The National Convention and the Woman's Movement," ISR, VIII (May, 1908), 688-690.

[15] "Nebraska Party News," Socialist (Seattle), November 22, 1903, p. 3.

[16] Wenonah Stevens Abbott, "Women's Department: W. N. S. U. Convention," The Vanguard, II (May, 1904), 18-20; Molle, "The National Convention and the Woman's Movement," p. 688.

[17] Abbott, "Women's Department," pp. 19-20. The reporter was president of the WNSU, therefore had first-hand knowledge of the events.

[18] Josephine R. Cole, "Women's Unions," Appeal to Reason, June 13, 1903, p. 3.

[19] See the monthly reports of the Woman's Branch, Local Cook County (Chicago, Illinois), in issues of the Socialist Woman, 1907-1908.

[20] The Equality League for Self-Supporting Women was later renamed the Women's Political Union (1910). Blatch said the name

was changed because the phrase "self-supporting women" deterred many from joining. (Harriot Stanton Blatch and Alma Lutz, Challenging Years; the Memoirs of Harriot Stanton Blatch [New York, 1940], p. 136.)

[21] Street meetings had been used by the nineteenth-century suffrage movement, but had been abandoned to achieve more decorum.

[22] For the history of the Equality League, see: Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle; the Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (New York, 1971), pp. 249-253.

[23] John Spargo, "Woman and the Socialist Movement," pp. 449-450.

[24] A. M. Simons, "The Stuttgart Congress," ISR, VII (September, 1907), 141-143. The suffrage resolution was reprinted, p. 142. Concurrent with the meeting of the Second International was held the First International Congress of Socialist Women. One question considered was that of separate organizations for socialist women. (May Wood Simons attended for the United States.) It was decided that, although in some countries separate organizations might be necessary (as in Germany where the law forbade women to belong to political parties), wherever possible every socialist woman should belong to the party. See: Antoinette Konikow, "Socialist Women in Germany," New York Call, December 5, 1908, p. 5.

[25] Socialist Party, Proceedings of the National Convention of the Socialist Party (Chicago, 1908), p. 10. (Hereafter cited as Proceedings of the 1908 Convention.)

[26] Ibid., p. 306.

[27] Ibid., p. 301.

[28] Socialist Party, Proceedings of the First National Congress of the Socialist Party of the United States (Chicago, 1910), p. 178. (Hereafter cited as Proceedings of the 1910 Congress.)

[29] Proceedings of the 1908 Convention, p. 302.

[30] Ibid., p. 305.

[31] Ibid., p. 303.

[32] Ibid., p. 304. See also the editorialized account of the

debate by Charles Kerr, "Women at the Convention," ISR, VIII (June, 1908), 782-783. Kerr commended the convention decision to establish a woman's committee.

[33] See for example, Josephine Conger, "A Little Gossip," Appeal to Reason, February 27, 1904, p. 8. The author later wrote that separate organizations were needed to develop "women's feelings of security;" they were "preparatory schools" to encourage women to join mixed locals. (Josephine Conger-Kaneko, "Separate Organizations," Socialist Woman, I [April, 1908], 5.) Theresa Malkiel reported after a conference of New York socialist women that it was the older women who recognized the need for separate organizations. The younger ones were "imbued with a spirit of equality of sex," and thought it a sacrilege to work anywhere but in the locals. ("Impressions of the New York Socialist Women's Conference," Socialist Woman, II [August, 1908], 13.)

[34] Proceedings of the 1910 Congress, p. 258.

[35] Article XVI of the party's constitution, adopted in 1910, read: "Sec. 1. At the beginning of each odd numbered year a Woman's National Committee of seven members shall be elected from the women members of the party by referendum vote of the entire membership of the party, in a manner similar to the election of members of the National Executive Committee. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner.

"Sec. 2. Such committees shall have general charge of propaganda and organization among women. All plans of such committee, concurred in by the National Executive Committee, shall be carried out at the expense of the national office." (Proceedings of the 1910 Congress, p. 258.)

[36] These aims were best expressed in an early "Plan for Local Work by the Woman's National Committee," SPOB, June, 1909, p. 3. For an example of the defensive attitudes of the separate socialist woman's organizations see: Anna Cohen, "Work of Woman's Socialist League in Philadelphia," New York Call, October 3, 1908, p. 5. Cohen argued that the Philadelphia league was for women what trade unions were for men, a method of initiation into the principles of socialism. Therefore, the league was performing a necessary function. The same spirit of rebellion is evident in a report of a convention of socialist women held at the same time as the 1908 convention. See: Josephine Conger-Kaneko, "The Matter of Women's Organizations," Socialist Woman, II (June, 1908), 6.

[37] Spargo, "Woman and the Socialist Movement," p. 453.

[38] In 1906 the party's National Literature Bureau offered, out

of 100 titles, three which dealt directly with the woman question: Engels, *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*; Bebel, *Woman and Socialism*; and May Walden Kerr, *Socialism and the Home*. (*SPOB*, February, 1906, p. 4.) Kerr's pamphlet tried to suggest how socialism applied to woman's traditional activities: feeding and clothing a family, or love and marriage. Although that approach was often followed by the WNC in its literature appeal, Kerr's conclusions about what women could do reflected a sentiment often seen in early journal articles. She told women, "Primarily, your work is to create a sentiment in favor of the overthrow of capitalism, and the establishment of the Cooperative Commonwealth," (p. 25) By 1908, socialist women wanted to do something more than "creating a sentiment."

[39] "Correspondence of the National Executive Committee during November," *SPOB*, November, 1908, p. 2; *Proceedings of the 1910 Congress*, p. 179.

[40] "To Teach Women about Socialism," New York *Call*, December 26, 1910, p. 4. In addition to general appeal items such as "Why You Should be a Socialist," and "Work among Women," the WNC planned leaflets directed to the housewife, the professional woman, the worker and the domestic servant. ("Minutes of the Woman's National Committee, Session Friday Morning, May 20, 1910," *SPOB*, May, 1910, p. 3.)

[41] Meta L. Stern, "To Wives of Toilers," Woman's National Committee leaflet, Socialist Party Collection, Duke University Library. (Hereafter cited as SPC, Duke.) Theresa S. Malkiel's leaflet, "To the Working Woman," (WNC leaflet, SPC, Duke,) was an attempt to refute the attitude supposedly prevalent among working girls that marriage was a way out of their economic situation. For an explicit denial of the notion that women would not be permitted to work in the Cooperative Commonwealth, see: John M. Work, "Should Women Work?" WNC leaflet, SPC, Duke. (Also reprinted in Socialist Party, Socialist Campaign Book [Chicago, 1912], pp. 183-184.)

[42] Victor L. Berger, "Madam, How Will You Feed Your Family?" WNC leaflet, SPC, Duke. The same theme was expressed by Berger in "Women Must Find Profits for the Trusts," (February, 1910), *Broadsides* (3rd ed.; Milwaukee, 1913), pp. 245-251. *Broadsides* is a collection of editorials from Berger's paper, the Milwaukee *Social-Democratic Herald*.

[43] Anna A. Maley, *Our National Kitchen, the Substance of a Speech on Socialism* (Minneapolis, 1916).

[44] Elizabeth H. Thomas, "To Drag Down or Uplift?," New York *Call*, March 30, 1910, p. 5.

[45] Stern, "To Wives of Toilers."

[46] See for example: "Join the Campaign for a Fifty Percent Woman Membership," Progressive Woman, VI (March, 1913), 3.

[47] Mari Jo Buhle ("Women and the Socialist Party, 1901-1914," in Edith H. Altbach (ed.), From Feminism to Liberation [Cambridge, 1971], pp. 65-86.) has suggested that socialist women measured success in terms of membership figures. Buhle has written that because socialist women made this interpretation, the party as a whole accepted it. Consequently, when the goal went largely unfulfilled, the party abolished a committee that had been unsuccessful. See below for an alternative explanation of the party's decision to abolish the WNC.

[48] "Plan of Work for Women in Socialist Locals," WNC leaflet, SPC, Duke. Although the leaflet is dated 1913, the WNC was making similar suggestions as early as 1909. For example: "To Socialist Women," SPOB, February, 1909, p. 6; or "Plan for Local Work by Woman's National Committee," SPOB, June, 1909, p. 3. For denials of separate organizations see Winnie Branstetter, "Local Committees on Propaganda among Women," Party Builder, October 30, 1912, p. 2; or "Woman's National Committee; Correspondence," SPOB, November, 1911, p. 2. (In 1913, the Party Builder replaced the Socialist Party Official Bulletin as the official newsletter; in 1912, the two were published simultaneously. The Party Builder was superceded in 1914 by the American Socialist.)

[49] "Woman's National Committee: Correspondence," SPOB, September, 1910, p. 2; "Minutes of the Woman's National Committee, Session, August 11, 13, 15, 1911," SPOB, August, 1911, p. 5.

[50] Bessy Fiset, "The Woman," Socialist (Seattle), January 9, 1909, p. 1.

[51] "Letter to the Editor," ("A Mere Woman Complains"), New York Call, January 20, 1911, p. 6; see also: "Letters to the Editor," January 24, 1911 and January 27, 1911.

[52] "Resolution Adopted by the Woman's National Committee," SPOB, June, 1909, p. 2.

[53] "Woman's National Committee: Correspondence," SPOB, October, 1910, p. 1.

[54] "Report of the Organizer of the Woman's Committee, Local New

York, for the period March 11 to March 25, 1912," Socialist Party, New York County Local Papers, 1907-1914 (New York, Tamiment Institute Library, microfilm, 1962).

[55] "New York State Secretary Reports Progress and Activities in the Various Locals," New York Call, July 22, 1913, p. 5.

[56] J. L. Engdahl, "Socialists Wrestling with Money Questions," New York Call, July 15, 1913, p. 3.

[57] "Woman's Bureau," Party Builder, May 23, 1914, p. 3.

[58] "Woman's Bureau; May Wood Simons Resigns from Woman's National Committee," American Socialist, January 9, 1915, p. 4.

[59] "Executive Department," American Socialist, January 16, 1915, p. 3.

[60] "Woman's Bureau," American Socialist, January 30, 1915, p. 2.

[61] For example: Pauline Myers-Hanson, "Letter to the Editor," American Socialist, March 6, 1915, p. 3; or Theresa S. Malkiel, "Letter to the Editor," American Socialist, April 24, 1915, p. 3. The phrase "autocratic bureaucracy" was used by George Goebel, National Committeeman from New Jersey, in connection with the denial of his motion to approve a meeting of the WNC. ("Executive Department," American Socialist, January 30, 1915, p. 3.)

[62] "Report of the Woman's National Committee; Majority Report," Socialist Party National Committee Session, May, 1915 (SPC, Duke).

[63] "Report of the Woman's National Committee; Minority Report," Socialist Party National Committee Session, May, 1915 (SPC, Duke).

[64] "Forward to the 1916 Presidential Campaign that Will Mark Huge Advance in Progress of American Socialism," American Socialist, May 22, 1915, p. 2.

[65] "Ballots Sent out for Referendum," American Socialist, June 12, 1915, p. 3; "Constitutional Amendments Carried," American Socialist, August 14, 1915, p. 1.

[66] Josephine Conger-Kaneko, "Letter to the Editor," American Socialist, July 10, 1915, p. 3.

[67] S. Parks, "Letter to the Editor," American Socialist, July 24, 1915, p. 3; John M. Work, "Letter to the Editor," American Socialist, February 12, 1916, p. 3. Work had been Executive Secretary of the party in 1910, when the permanent WNC was established. Work liked to think of himself as the father of the Woman's National Committee, although he later supported its abolition. ("Letter to the Editor," American Socialist, September 11, 1915, p. 3.)

[68] Josephine Conger-Kaneko, "Letter to the Editor," American Socialist, July 10, 1915, p. 3.

[69] John M. Work, "Letter to the Editor," American Socialist, September 11, 1915, p. 3.

[70] "Executive Department," American Socialist, January 29, 1916, p. 3. Less than a year later the members voted to retain the Information Department of the national office, and the party decided that a referendum to determine the party's Presidential nominee would give socialists greater control over the final choice.

[71] Gabriel Kolko, ("The Decline of American Radicalism in the Twentieth Century," Studies on the Left, VI [1966], 9-26.) has suggested that the socialist belief that they would be victorious in the near future was a source for the party's weakness. The optimism prevented the socialists from dealing realistically with immediate problems.

[72] "Report of the Woman's Department to the National Committee in Session, May 10, 1914," Party Builder, May 23, 1914, p. 5.

[73] Emma B. Denney (Secretary, Local Canton, Illinois), "Letter to the Editor," American Socialist, July 3, 1915, p. 3.

CHAPTER IV

Immediate Demands for the Female Sex: The Socialists and Women Suffrage

To be effective, the program for attracting women to the Socialist Party had to contain promises that socialism would ultimately erase woman's inequality. Such a program would reflect the party's idea of the nature of woman, and its thoughts on the goals of the sex as a group. According to socialist theory, only with the coming of the Cooperative Commonwealth would women attain complete economic independence, the basis of full equality, however, some conditions could be changed immediately. The party always supported the demands of organized workingmen for reforms to alleviate the worst circumstances of their employment, and with the acknowledgment of women as a special group, socialists tried to do the same for the female sex. Reforms were supported which would improve the status of women in the present and at the same time move the country one step closer to socialism.

American socialists divided their program into two parts: the "ultimate goal," which was the Cooperative Commonwealth, and "immediate demands," suggestions which, while not necessarily socialist, could be put into effect immediately, one at a time, to the betterment of society. One of the reasons for the split in the Socialist Labor Party had been that party's refusal to alter its revolutionary program to allow for ameliorative measures.[1] The "Kangaroos," who eventually fused with the other groups to form the Socialist Party of America, wanted a program of practical objectives included in the party platform. Consequently, when the Socialist Party was created in 1901, it was committed to social reform as a revolutionary tactic. Immediate demands occasioned some intra-party disputes after the Unity Convention, with segments of the party being accused of an ultra-reformist stance, but American socialists generally agreed that the ultimate goal could be gained through immediate demands.

Socialists carefully explained that reform measures supported by the party were those which would eventually bring about the new social order, and acceptable reforms had to benefit the working class politically and economically.[2] "The effect of every true socialist reform must be to transfer some measure of power from the employing classes," Morris Hillquit summarized.[3] It was also contended that socialist-supported measures formed a unified program. Since no reform was alone sufficient to bring about the Cooperative Commonwealth, no individual reform warranted the concentration of all party efforts for its realization. Wages, hours, and factory regulation, as well as good government, public ownership of utilities and the democratization of the franchise were some of the immediate demands promoted by the Socialist Party. Taken together, it was thought that they would result in the attainment of socialism but no one reform could be considered more important than the others.

When most socialists spoke of the woman question, the meaning in immediate, practical terms was the right to full political equality.

Woman suffrage, as recent studies have observed, became the rallying point for feminine protest during the first twenty years of the century.[4] Although not all could be considered feminists, organized groups of women could usually unite behind a suffrage banner. In view of the increased educational and professional opportunities, suffrage became a symbol to women, the last vestige of their "inferiority." The vote was only a part of the woman question, but it was the one concrete political demand associated with women as a group. Therefore, the Socialist Party's reaction to the suffrage campaign is indicative of its commitment to immediate demands for women, and its response to women as a special interest group.

"Votes for women" had been included as one of the immediate demands in the Socialist Party's first national platform.[5] Until 1916, it remained the only plank directed to women as a group. For the 1916 Presidential campaign, socialists adopted a program calling for "mothers' pensions," however, only widows with young children would have benefited.[6] Other industrial demands, such as shorter working hours, applied to women as well as to men, but only the equal suffrage plank was specifically directed towards improving the condition of all women.

During the early years of party growth, little effort was expended to promote the suffrage issue. Not until the formation of the Woman's National Committee (WNC) in 1908 did socialists begin to participate in suffrage activities. Their national platform for 1908 pledged socialists to engage in an "active campaign" for unrestricted and equal suffrage for women, and until the Nineteenth Amendment was adopted, the franchise was the focus of the party's concern with the woman question.[7]

Just as the creation of the Woman's National Committee seemed to mark a change in party attitude towards the woman question, a change towards increasing concern with the role of women in the party, the 1908 resolution on woman suffrage seemed to mark the emergence of demands for women to a position of importance in the party's priorities. However, immediate demands for women suffered the same fate as the Woman's Bureau. Theoretically socialists were in favor of votes for women, but the practicality of enfranchisement often evoked an ambivalent response from the members. As a result, the suffrage movement received less than full cooperation of the Socialist Party and internally the issue caused the party to reconsider its response to various reforms.

Political democracy was the party's governing philosophy, making extension of voting rights to women an integral part of its ideology. Socialists said they were suffragists because they believed in democracy, not a "sham democracy," but a "real one with equality for all citizens."[8] In a speech to the New York Judiciary Committee hearings on a proposed equal suffrage amendment to the state constitution, John Spargo argued that the opponents of woman suffrage were clearly undemocratic. Reflecting that the argument used by the "antis" against woman suffrage could also be used against male suffrage, Spargo concluded, "We [socialists] would preserve the institutions of Democracy against the attacks of those who would destroy them in the interests of Privilege."[9] Socialists declared that democracy could not exist as long as privilege -- sex or property -- was allowed to continue. It is to the credit of the party that, in a period of increasing nativist sentiment which enveloped even the National American Woman Suffrage Association, socialists refused to countenance any suffrage legislation with property qualifications or race restrictions.

Although democratic sentiment was an important element of socialist theory, it was not the main argument.[10] Justice demanded votes for women, but as one party member noted, "For the socialist movement, the demand for woman suffrage is not a mere sentimental proposition of abstract justice."[11] Consistent with their theory of social reform, socialists proposed that women from the working class would benefit most from woman suffrage. For middle-class and upper-class women the vote would be only a convenience; for working-class women it was an absolute necessity.[12] Ballots in the hands of women would be used to attain "industrial freedom" since with them the workingmen would gain the cooperation of workingwomen in the struggle against the capitalist class.[13] Woman suffrage, then, was "simply a means, not an end."[14]

"We do not believe for a moment that the vote in itself will solve the working girl's problems," the New York Call wrote during the state's first suffrage referendum campaign. "But we do believe, and we cannot iterate this belief too frequently, that the working girl cannot even begin to improve her lot until she possesses and uses the same weapons given to the workingman -- the trade union and the ballot."[15] With the vote, workingwomen would be able to improve their immediate economic situation. "Any fight which is centered [solely] on the gaining of the ballot is a defective and ineffective fight," socialists argued. But votes could be used to gain economic independence, and for that reason socialists fought for woman suffrage. Political rights were inconsequential unless they were used to win economic equality.[16]

Leonora O'Reilley, a socialist member of the Women's Trade Union League, coined a slogan expressing this facet of the socialist suffrage arguments. "We do not want the ballot, we need it!" she remarked of workingwomen.[17] Socialist literature pointed out that workingmen could not know the needs of woman as women knew them, and so could not hope to represent woman's wishes.[18] For socialists, the ballot was a source of power, and they argued that the poor working conditions under which women labored were a result of their disenfranchisement. Women workers received low wages because they had no power; since power came with the ballot, the right to vote was necessary for self-protection.[19] A Woman's National Committee leaflet proclaimed, ".., workingwomen NEED the ballot. They need it as a means of self-defense in the terrible competitive struggle that marks our present industrial system. They need it to protect their very health, the life and future of their children."[20] The ballot was the most direct means to secure the passage of favorable legislation, and socialists recognized that workingwomen did not have time to devote to indirect methods.[21]

The emphasis in socialist arguments on the absolute necessity of votes for workingwomen had an unforeseen consequence. By stressing enfranchisement of women who worked, socialists in effect divided the woman movement along class lines. The vote became not a demand for women but a demand for workingwomen. "Why do socialists support woman suffrage?" Meta Stern asked in the Call. "Because Socialism seeks to accomplish the emancipation of the working class and the working class consists of women as well as men. Because Socialism means the achievement of a higher social order, and the brains and hearts and hands of both men and women are needed to bring about its ultimate victory."[22] Just as socialists used their interpretation of the woman question not for woman's liberation, but to condemn capitalism, they used the suffrage campaign to emphasize the unity of class, not the common oppression of all women.

Although woman suffrage was always accepted as an immediate demand, some socialists were alarmed by the possible political effects of granting women the right to vote. The effectiveness of their theoretical explanations was curtailed by the socialist view of the nature of woman, and the anticipated consequences of enfranchisement. Socialists recognized that women needed the ballot to change their own economic conditions, however, some party members feared that ballots in the hands of women would push the arrival of the Cooperative Commonwealth well into the future. The argument was an old one, appearing in the works of Laurence Gronlund in the 1880's. Women impeded social progress, Gronlund insisted, because they were conservative by nature.[23] Suffragists labored throughout the campaign to prove the progressiveness of the female sex, and their concern with social reform, but the Socialist Party was never fully convinced.

The party often assumed the pose of martyr, crucified on the cross of equal rights. Granting votes to women was not politically expedient, American socialists thought, because women were known to be apolitical, if not downright opposed to socialism. But socialists affirmed the democratic foundations of their beliefs and included the demand in their platform in spite of the expected adverse results.[24] As the suffrage movement began to make progress, with several state victories in 1910 and 1912, party expressions began to drop allusions to the conservative nature of woman, speaking instead of her "openmindedness." It was then suggested that the new women voters would give socialism a fair hearing and might even enhance its chances of victory.[25]

While some socialists questioned the use women would make of their votes, others sought to subordinate that demand to reforms thought more relevant to a socialist victory. This argument was tied to the Socialist Party's belief in the inevitability of socialism and to their faith in its fast approach. Women should be given the vote, the opponents of suffrage agitation admitted, but it was a futile effort to concentrate on suffrage agitation when, with the socialist victory, suffrage would automatically be granted. Woman suffrage, it was thought, could be subordinated to socialist agitation. Probably the least theoretical, but most explicit statement of this view was made by Mother Jones, the redoubtable old lady who was still leading strikes and being arrested although over seventy years old. "You don't need a vote to raise hell," she reportedly told a meeting in New York City. "You need convictions and a voice."[26] The view was shared by socialist leaders throughout the country.

Victor Berger, the first Socialist congressman, consistently evoked the ire of socialist women. In spite of his work for suffrage during his term in the House of Representatives, Berger insisted that the advancement of socialism was the only goal; suffrage agitation had to be subordinate.[27]

Occasionally the necessity of votes for women was challenged by a socialist. At the 1912 convention, dedication to woman suffrage was dismissed as an inappropriate criterion for party membership. Delegate William Rodregiuz from Illinois insisted that he knew many "good Socialists" who were not convinced of the efficacy of votes for women,[28] But Delegate Rodregiuz was an exception. Few socialists really objected to enfranchising women. Their opposition resulted mainly from a fear of the effects of allowing women to vote.

Although some socialists were reluctant to give unqualified support to the votes for women campaign, the party's ideological commitment to enfranchising women was never really questioned. Only the tactics to be used in the socialist suffrage campaign created antipathy between sections of the party. In 1908, when the party established its woman's committee, socialists also pledged themselves to engage in an "active campaign" for woman suffrage. It was assumed that the campaign would follow the guidelines adopted by the Stuttgart conference the year before.[29] Socialists at Stuttgart had proposed that, although it was expected that socialist parties would agitate for woman suffrage, socialist women should not unite with any middle-class suffrage movements. The socialist suffrage campaign would be an independent operation. Cooperation with existing suffrage organizations in the United States was, therefore, one issue socialists debated, and cooperation led to questions about the party's commitment to the working class. Suffrage agitation also brought into focus the problem of emphasizing the demands of only one segment of the working class. Socialist suffrage theory tried to explain that the entire working class would benefit if women voted. Still, the benefits did seem less concrete than, for example, an eight-hour day for all workers. It was the suffrage campaign that forced socialists to choose between an appeal to workingwomen as women, or an appeal as workers. In the process of defining its tactics for the suffrage campaign American socialism would begin to designate the limits of its political appeal.

When the temporary woman's committee made its recommendations to the party's 1910 convention, the subject of tactics to promote woman suffrage was brought up for discussion. The WNC resolved that "woman's disenfranchisement being a great factor in aggravating her economic dependence, we urge the Party to take more direct action in the matter of woman suffrage, which should, however, be carried on under Party supervision and advocated from Party platforms."[30] This point of view, consistent with the Stuttgart resolution, declared that individual socialists might cooperate with suffrage organizations, but the Socialist Party as a body should not commit itself to support any particular group.[31] An alternate proposal was offered in the "Report on Propaganda" presented by Morris Hillquit. Hillquit claimed that as well as being the political representative of the workers, the Socialist Party was also the only truly progressive party in the country. As such, it had to be in the vanguard of all movements of social justice and progress. Specifically, Hillquit called for cooperation with woman suffrage groups. The party, he said, should never merge its identity, but it had to avoid "voluntary isolation." "In this case, as in many similar cases, Socialism must break through the narrow area of our organization and must penetrate into the masses of the people as a living and vivifying social force."[32] Hillquit's statement was offered as an amendment to the WNC proposal, occasioning the debate over tactics.

No one challenged the party's devotion to woman suffrage. The discussion concerned the Socialist Party's relationship to reform movements and its position as leader in areas of social reform. The fundamental difference between the two positions revolved around the necessity of cooperation in order to lead. Beneath this question of leadership was the class issue. The outcome of the debate would indicate the direction of American socialism, whether it would shun class differences to concentrate on group cooperation, or continue to maintain its economic class identity. When Hillquit called for cooperation with existing suffrage organizations he was asking the party to shed its aloofness and become part of the world as it was. As Lena Morrow Lewis, the first woman to be elected to the National Executive Committee (1910), reminded the delegates, even if every one of them favored woman suffrage socialists could not give women the vote.[33] Hillquit's group wanted the party to endorse the woman suffrage organizations,as the representative of the interests of a special group. Cooperation with the suffrage organizations would have been similar, they thought, to the party's recognition of the American Federation of Labor, decidedly not a socialist body, as the voice of labor's economic interests.[34] These socialists realized that the party, at that point in time, did not have the power to put its immediate demands into practice. If the immediate demands were to prepare the way for the Cooperative Commonwealth, then it was expedient to cooperate with nonpartisan organizations which could potentially effect the reform.

The WNC-supporters insisted that the Hillquit proposal would shift the total responsibility for suffrage agitation to the woman's associations, leaving the Socialist Party without any influence in the suffrage campaign.[35] To commit the party as a body to the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) was seen as a rejection of leadership of a reform movement. To counter Hillquit's point that the suffrage organization was not working for a limited franchise, as were suffrage groups in Europe, the WNC argued that Hillquit's view covered only the NAWSA's statement of principles. In reality, the movement on the state level worked actively for limited suffrage bills.

The Socialist Party's devotion to working-class interests proved to be the deciding point in the debate. The WNC felt that cooperation with woman suffrage organizations was a denial of class. The NAWSA was definitely a middle-class association in this period, and by 1910, had begun to attract the interest of several upper-class women. The WNC argued that there could be no justification in pursuing woman suffrage if it were only a middle-class reform. A New York organizer pointed out to the delegates that it was difficult, it not impossible, to show working girls that their economic interests did not correspond to those of the middle class if, through suffrage arguments, they were led to believe that, politically, all women shared a similar interest.[36] It was frequently repeated that bourgeois suffrage and socialist suffrage were "absolutely antagonistic in their aims."[37] The Hillquit group countered, "You can't draw the class line effectively until you have obliterated the sex line politically."[38] Until workingwomen could vote, it would be impossible to get them to see how their interests differed from the middle class.

The appeal to class swayed the convention. The delegates voted to uphold the WNC's position that the Socialist Party's suffrage campaign had to maintain a separate identity. As a result, the party theoretically withdrew from participation in the organized woman suffrage movement. The WNC had once again assumed a compromise position. The Socialist Party would conduct a suffrage campaign, even though some denied its usefulness. However, the campaign would be along class lines. It would pursue suffrage for working-class women, and ignore other classes in the woman movement.

The decision in 1910 gave the WNC full responsibility to plan and put into operation the party's suffrage campaign. Socialist suffrage activities differed very little from those of other suffrage organizations. Leaflets and suffrage editions of the socialist press served as written propaganda. Literature prepared by the WNC after 1910, attempted to explain why women should have the vote and why women who could vote should cast their ballots for the Socialist Party. Suffrage editions of socialist journals appeared regularly after 1908. "Votes for women" was the only special demand to attain this degree of recognition; neither farmers, immigrants, nor blacks ever achieved the distinction of having a special edition of a paper devoted to their problems.

Petitions were another tactic, used frequently by the suffragists, and accepted by the socialist women. Since the time when women had participated in the anti-slavery crusade, petitioning legislatures was recognized as an effective method for women without political power to make known their wishes. Soon after its formation in 1908, the WNC agreed to circulate an NAWSA petition, causing some consternation among members who wished to remain separate from the suffrage organization. The action was justified at that time, the WNC replied, because the petitioning was already in progress, and the socialist-circulated forms would be clearly designated.[39] When, in 1910, the socialists elected their first representative to Congress, the WNC began plans for a socialist suffrage petition, to be used by Victor Berger in the formation of his suffrage bill.[40] However, even a petition sponsored solely by socialist women proved unacceptable to some socialists. When a New York local was called upon at the 1912 convention to explain its refusal to sign the petition, a delegate from that state insisted that it had nothing to do with a belief in the rightness of woman suffrage; it was a matter of principle that a socialist should under no circumstances petition a capitalist government.[41]

Socialist women appeared before state legislatures to express their thoughts on woman suffrage, and several socialists took part in the Congressional hearings on the woman suffrage amendment in March, 1912 (during Berger's term in office). They appeared as units in the suffrage parades which became popular after 1910, and the WNC began in 1911 to send fraternal delegates to NAWSA conventions.[42] The most original idea, however, was the initiation of a "Woman's Day," a day devoted by socialists across the country to the study of the woman question. The federal government had declared June 12, 1908 to be "Mothers' Day," and the labor movement annually celebrated the first day of May as a tribute to the workingman. Consequently, in response to appeals from New York women that socialist women should have their own day, the WNC designated the last Sunday in February as socialist "Woman's Day." On "Woman's Day" locals throughout the country were urged to plan special programs to emphasize the party's concern for woman's rights.

The socialist suffrage campaign as directed by the WNC was largely educational. It tried to make the suffrage issue known and approved in socialist circles. It never attempted to organize state referendum campaigns, although socialist women certainly participated in those planned by others. It has been suggested that the woman suffrage movement could not succeed until the working class was awakened to the need for votes for women, and the Socialist Party has been given full credit for this achievement.[43] Certainly this was the goal of the socialist women. "Naturally it would be above all the workingwoman's cause that shall find its full expression upon our suffrage day," a comrade wrote in anticipation of the first Woman's Day.[44] Socialist literature contributed to the image, emphasizing the particular needs of workingwomen and the neglect of this issue by the middle-class suffrage movement. Socialist suffrage clubs were organized to enlist the efforts of workingwomen in their own emancipation. However, it must be noted that the Socialist Party was not alone in its appeals to wage earners. For example, in New York City, the Woman Suffrage Party, organized in 1909, actively invaded the immigrant and working-class districts with its campaign, and the Women's Political Union, the group headed by Harriot Stanton Blatch, also appealed to workingwomen.[45]

Results of the suffrage campaigns in which socialists directly participated suggest that the party was not as successful in awakening the working class as it had hoped to be. It has been claimed that the socialist effort was responsible for suffrage victories in at least three states: Kansas in 1912, Nevada in 1914, and New York in 1917.[46] Although socialists claimed credit for the suffrage victory in Nevada, it was later denied by a socialist woman who served as a watcher at the polls. Commenting on the veracity of the "bourgeois movement's" claim of socialist hypocrisy, she reported having seen "innumerable socialist votes" marked "No" on the suffrage referendum.[47] The cause of the New York victory was disputed at the time, suffragists charging that the "antis" were spreading the rumors of the connection with socialism.[48] On the other hand, states in which suffrage referenda were defeated suggest that the party was often somewhat lax in its campaign efforts. The election results in Wisconsin are a good example. Wisconsin had probably the best organized Socialist Party in the United States. In 1910, it had elected a Congressman, and the Mayor of the state's largest city. But in 1912, the state failed to approve a suffrage amendment. Women of that state had to wait until the federal amendment was ratified to be enfranchised. The paradox did not pass unnoticed by socialist women who accused the Wisconsin party of ignoring the suffrage issue.[49]

It would seem that the evidence for acclaiming the Socialist Party's role in awakening the working class to the suffrage issue is inconclusive. Quite possibly the Socialist Party did gain for woman suffrage the support of the working class, at least that portion of it which was socialist. On the other hand, the AFL supported woman suffrage, although the demand was never actively pursued by the unions, and the Women's Trade Union League and the humanitarian reformers who filled the settlement houses also contributed to the working-class attitude. The suffrage campaigns are important only because they reflect a hesitancy on the part of both state parties and individual socialists to commit themselves to the party's only immediate demand for women, leaving the party open to accusations of insincerity.

In addition to the campaigns to make the working class conscious of the need for woman suffrage, the WNC also tried to show suffragists why it was useless to put their faith in the old parties. It was the Progressive Party which first threatened the socialists. In 1912, a suffrage plank was included in its platform and socialists feared that women who could vote would be misled by the Progressive show. Theodore Roosevelt was accused of political expediency as socialist women worked to overcome the Progressive appeal.[50] Since it was thought that the party which eventually gave woman the vote would have "scooped" the opposition, and could look forward to support from grateful women voters, the Socialist Party was eager to remain in sole possession of the suffrage plank."[51]

Convinced of Roosevelt's duplicity, socialist women pointed to their party's female candidates as proof of its sincerity. After 1908, the party did appear to support its belief in equality by frequently nominating women as candidates. In the eastern states, socialists placed women on their slates for the position of Secretary of State.[52] Women ran for seats in state assemblies, and the 1910 campaign for Congress of Kate Richards O'Hare was proudly reported by socialist papers far removed from her Kansas home.[53] The Washington Socialist Party nominated for governor in 1912 their state organizer, Anna A. Maley. Socialist women were also encouraged to run as candidates for local school boards and the party was overjoyed when Meta Berger, having served eight years on the Milwaukee board, was elected its president.[54] But if party victories were slim, those by socialist women were virtually non-existent. Berger's election was one of the few successes by socialist women. More representative were the results of the Washington gubernatorial race, in which Maley ran several thousand votes behind the rest of the socialist slate, including the party's Presidential nominee.[55]

As the WNC gained momentum, its activities tended more and more to emphasize the suffrage campaign. Their enfranchisement began to be seen by socialist women as the "main issue." No longer could it be a "side issue" to the real socialist goal.[56] By 1915 suffrage was symbolic of the attempts by socialist women to make the party respond to the woman question. When the WNC was given responsibility to operate the party's suffrage campaign, it was with the understanding that it would be a socialist campaign and that it would emphasize first of all socialism, making votes for women a part of the whole program. This is exactly what the WNC tried to do; it was the rationale behind their position at the 1910 convention. But the decision taken then had two unforeseen consequences. It removed the responsibility for propagandizing feminine goals from male agitators, leaving it exclusively with the women, and it isolated the WNC as an organization of women concerned with the problems of women, rather than a body of socialists. The effect of both was to create in the minds of many socialists a distrust of the motives of the women, a feeling that the WNC represented feminism rather than socialism. By 1915, it was apparent that the Socialist Party could tolerate women as comrades only as long as uniquely feminist immediate demands were subordinate to the ultimate socialist goal.

In attempting to be both socialists and women, the WNC drew support from the history of the two movements. The two, they discovered, were intimately connected because they sprang from the same economic sources. The two struggles -- the sex struggle and the class struggle -- existed together through history; only in the present were they united by the working class, whose women gave substance to the woman movement.[57] The WNC represented the idea that working-class women existed apart from both movements. They needed special appeals from socialists, and had problems different from the women of the suffrage movement. In trying to be socialists and also a part of the woman movement, the WNC argued that the socialist revolution could not be accomplished until women attained political rights to participate in the struggle on an equal basis. The WNC was no longer willing to subordinate woman's ~~rights~~ until the world was won for socialism.

By 1915 the Woman's National Committee had revealed its feminist orientation. In developing their ideas, the socialist women had begun to create their own philosophy and their unique demands. The move towards feminism was symbolized by the formation in 1914 of an independent socialist woman's group -- the Feminist Alliance. Henrietta Rodman, who considered herself a socialist, was the moving force behind the alliance which spoke only for the interests of women.[58] Rodman explained the distinction to a socialist suffrage rally in 1915. While feminist demands stressed the rights of women, socialists reflected the rights of the whole human race. Women had special problems to be solved by the ultimate goal of an Equal Rights Amendment, but their immediate demands included equal educational opportunities, rational dress, cooperative housework and the right to birth control information.[59]

The Socialist Party with its emphasis on political rights for women, with full equality to be achieved only in the Cooperative Commonwealth, was unable to reply to feminist demands. Although constantly reminded that the duty of the Socialist Party was to be in the vanguard of reform movements, the party allowed itself to be eclipsed by the feminist movement. As early as 1909, some socialists were complaining that 75% of socialist women were working for sex recognition rather than socialist goals.[60] By 1915 the two movements had become virtually incompatible. The ideological divergence was finalized by the abolition of the Woman's National Committee. The WNC expressed the belief that women had special problems and that socialism had to be made applicable to them. By abolishing the WNC, the party in effect said that women were not allowed immediate demands which concerned the sex only. That its decision was inconsistent with its treatment of male workers and their immediate demands did not occur to socialists who thought that by ousting the WNC they were returning to socialism "pure and simple." The abolition of the WNC marked the end of the socialist experiment with special interest groups. After 1915, the party lost any possibility it had possessed for uniting feminist goals with its socialist program. Its only concession was the inclusion of a demand for "mothers' pensions" in its 1916 campaign.

By 1915 most of the party's time was devoted to an anti-militarism crusade to keep the United States out of World War I. Socialist women were expected to put aside feminist demands and organize workingwomen against the government's prepardness campaign. As conservatism and individualism had been earlier, pacifism now came to be seen as an uniquely feminine characteristic. The maternal instinct made woman "naturally" anti-militaristic; she did not raise her sons to be "cannon fodder." A common bond of motherhood enabled women to transcend international boundaries. "American motherhood does not fear Japanese motherhood;" socialists proclaimed, "a little German coffin breaks a French mother's heart."[61] Woman was once again stereotyped to fit the socialist condemnation of capitalism. The capitalist economic system had been castigated for preventing some women from fulfilling the image of mother. With the outbreak of World War I, socialists began to use the effect of war on motherhood as part of its critique of capitalist militarism.

Although abolishing the WNC, the party continued to pursue its suffrage campaign, making a federal amendment its specific goal in 1916. However, its response to the suffrage movement had been altered. In late 1915, Meyer London, the newly elected Congressman from New York, announced the shift away from social reform, towards a limited definition of socialism. "We must concentrate our work in the suffrage movement on those things which make for Socialism. Suffrage is not the biggest thing before the country today. Preparedness, racial and national hatreds, all the infections from embattled Europe are graver and bigger things."[62] Allen L. Benson, the party's 1916 Presidential nominee told a convention of the Woman's Party that woman suffrage was not the first goal of the Socialist Party. It was, in fact, its last aim. He requested no support from female voters who wished to use the party only to enfranchise all women. To be meaningful, it had to be a vote for the whole socialist philosophy.[63]

Socialists would continue to agitate for votes for women, but agitation was no longer the only necessary activity. The suffrage movement had by 1916 moved beyond educational activities, and with the election of Carrie Chapman Catt to the presidency of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, began its final organizational drive. With the abolition of the WNC, no possibility existed that the Socialist Party could provide leadership in the drive. Although the WNC was officially disbanded in August, 1915, the women voted to maintain a socialist suffrage committee until after the elections, when suffrage referenda would be voted on in four crucial eastern states.[64] Women were no longer especially represented in the Socialist Party. Suffrage would be won without socialist help, and the new feminist philosophy was incompatible with the party's view of the nature and role of women.

NOTES: CHAPTER IV

[1] The Socialist Labor Party split is outlined in chap. i.

[2] For an explanation of American socialism's theory of social reform see: Morris Hillquit, Socialism in Theory and Practice (New York, 1912), pp. 207-209; and Robert Hunter, Socialists at Work (New York, 1908), pp. 178-209. Victor Berger, during his term as Congressman, offered the House of Representatives the following assessment of the socialist advocacy of reforms: "And I want it understood, the Socialist Party, while it is revolutionary in its final aim, is none the less distinctly evolutionary and constructive in its method. We welcome all kinds of reforms that are real reforms -- not political baits.

"Social reforms of all kinds are welcomed by the Socialists for many reasons.

"In the first place, by reforms we can stop the increasing pauperization and consequently also the enervation of the masses of the people. If real reforms are seriously taken up and carried out with determination they up-lift the masses to a considerable extent.

"But the main reason for our favoring social reforms is that such reforms, if logically carried out, offer the possibility of a peaceful, lawful, and orderly transformation of society." [reprinted in Socialist Party, Socialist Campaign Book (Chicago, 1912), pp. 254-255.]

[3] Hillquit, Socialism in Theory and Practice, p. 209.

[4] Christopher Lasch, The Agony of the American Left (New York, 1969), pp. 23-27; and William L. O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave; the Rise and Fall of Feminism in America (Chicago, 1969), pp. 50-54.

[5] "Social Democratic Platform of 1900," in Kirk H. Porter and Donald B. Johnson, National Party Platforms, 1840-1956 (New York, 1956), pp. 241-242.

[6] See chap. ii, n. 46.

[7] Socialist Party, Proceedings of the National Convention of the Socialist Party (Chicago, 1908), p. 165.

[8] Anita C. Block, "The Suffrage Message of the Socialists," Woman's National Committee leaflet, Socialist Party Collection, Duke University Library. (Hereafter cited as SPC, Duke.)

[9] "Spargo Demands Votes for Women," New York *Call*, February 26, 1909, p. 3.

[10] Lena Morrow Lewis, in "Woman Suffragists and Woman Suffragists," (*Socialist Woman*, I [February, 1908], 3), noted that socialists recognized two arguments for woman suffrage: "natural rights" and "social necessity." In many ways socialist explanations of the need for woman suffrage followed those of the woman suffrage movement. Aileen Kraditor, in *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (Garden City, 1971), has traced two distinct lines of reasoning on the suffrage question: arguments from "justice," and those from "expediency." From a nineteenth century faith in the principles of democracy, and an emphasis on the common humanity of men and women, suffrage arguments had changed by the twentieth century to stress the unique contributions women as a sex could make to the government. Woman suffrage was necessary because woman's special nature would make changes in the government which had long been neglected by men. It was anticipated that woman suffrage would result in large-scale social reforms.

[11] Morris Hillquit, "International Socialism and the Enfranchisement of Women," New York *Call*, February 27, 1909, p. 5.

[12] Hillquit, *Socialism in Theory and Practice*, p. 282.

[13] Socialist Party, *Socialist Campaign Book* (Chicago, 1912), p. 282.

[14] Louis A. Arnold, "Women Demand Ballot to Improve their Conditions," *American Socialist*, January 17, 1917, p. 1.

[15] Meta L. Stern, "Votes for Women Department," New York *Call*, December 5, 1914, p. 4.

[16] "Woman's Day," (editorial), New York *Call*, February 25, 1911, p. 6.

[17] Suffragists and Socialists Demand Votes for Women," New York *Call*, March 1, 1909, p. 1.

[18] Elsie Cole Phillips, "Woman's Need for the Ballot," WNC leaflet, SPC, Duke.

[19] Francis Squire Potter, "Why Women are Cheap," New York *Call*, October 16, 1909, p. 7.

[20] Meta L. Stern, "Votes for Working Women," WNC leaflet, SPC, Duke.

[21] Carl D. Thompson, "Self-Supporting Women," WNC leaflet, SPC, Duke.

[22] Meta L. Stern, "Our National Suffrage Campaign," New York Call, November 13, 1911, p. 6.

[23] Laurence Gronlund, The Cooperative Commonwealth in its Outlines; and Exposition of Modern Socialism (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1884), p. 184. For an example of socialist use of Gronlund's argument see: Hildegarde Hawthorne, "One Aspect of Woman Suffrage," New York Call, July 9, 1909, p. 6. Hawthorne argued that granting women the vote before socialists controlled the government would be self-defeating. Their votes would be "thrown against the advance of socialism."

[24] For an example see: May Wood Simons, "Woman and Politics," WNC leaflet, SPC, Duke.

[25] "Women Voters Seek Knowledge," Party Builder, November 15, 1913, p. 5. See also the 1913 appeal to the newly enfranchised women of California from J. Stitt Wilson, Socialist candidate for Congress, "Open Letter to the Women of Alameda County," Social Crusade Series, no. 11, (Berkeley, 1913), pp. 13-21, (Box 5, Marvin Sanford Collection, University of Washington Library).

[26] Mary H. Jones, The Autobiography of Mother Jones (Chicago, 1925), p. 203. The Call reported that Mother Jones told a New York audience, "Moreover, as I have said, the question of whether women have the vote is such a little thing: there are so many bigger and more vital questions -- the welfare of the child -- to be considered. I have no sympathy with people whose ideas are so small." ("Mother Jones Disapproves of Militants' Methods," November 17, 1913, p. 1.) Her opposition to woman suffrage is discussed in "Mother Mary Jones: the Labor Movement's Impious Joan of Arc," by Judith E. Mikeal ([unpublished M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1965], p. 149).

[27] "Victor Berger and Woman Suffrage," New York Call, May 19, 1911, p. 6. See also, the charge made by Vida Scudder in "Woman and Socialism," Yale Review, III (1914), 456.

[28] Socialist Party, Proceedings of the National Convention of the Socialist Party (Chicago, 1912), p. 118. (Hereafter cited as Proceedings of the 1912 Convention.)

[29] The Stuttgart resolution is discussed in chap. iii.

[30] Socialist Party, *Proceedings of the First National Congress of the Socialist Party in the United States* (Chicago, 1910), p. 180. (Hereafter cited as *Proceedings of the 1910 Congress*.)

[31] This position was one which had been established in New York by the state organization of socialist women at a conference in December, 1909. The conference adopted a resolution declaring against cooperation with existing suffrage organizations and in favor of independent socialist suffrage agitation among working-class women. The position, although put forward by the WNC in 1910, was argued by the New York delegate, Theresa Malkiel. It seems to have been a tactic suited to the urban centers with a large population of factory women. "Socialist Women Act ~~on~~ Suffrage," New York *Call*, December 20, 1909, p. 1.

[32] "Report on Propaganda," *Proceedings of the 1910 Congress*, p. 68.

[33] *Proceedings of the 1910 Congress*, p. 192.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 209.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 203.

[37] Elizabeth H. Thomas, "Wisconsin and Woman Suffrage," WNC leaflet, SPC, Duke.

[38] *Proceedings of the 1910 Congress*, p. 192.

[39] "Circular Letter of Woman's National Committee," *Socialist Party Official Bulletin*, March, 1909, p. 2. (Hereafter cited as *SPOB*.)

[40] "WNC Correspondence," *SPOB*, May, 1911, p. 4.

[41] *Proceedings of the 1912 Convention*, p. 119.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[43] Andrew Sinclair, *The Emancipation of the American Woman* (New York, 1966), p. 168; p. 310. Ella Reeve Bloor, a socialist woman agitator and at one time, member of the WNC, concurred with this view. (*We are Many; an Autobiography* [New York, 1940], pp. 92-93.)

[44] "Hebe," [pseud., Meta L. Stern], "Suffrage Day," New York Call, February 13, 1909, p. 7.

[45] Ronald Schaffer, "The New York City Woman Suffrage Party, 1909-1919," New York History, XLIII (July, 1962), 269-287. The Women's Political Union is discussed in chap. iii.

[46] James Weinstein, The Decline of Socialism in American, 1912-1925 (New York, 1967), pp. 60-61.

[47] "Nevada Goes for Suffrage," New York Call, November 6, 1914, p. 1; "Men Socialists Urged to Push Votes Campaign," New York Call, December 7, 1914, p. 2.

[48] Ida Husted Harper (ed.), History of Woman Suffrage (New York, 1922), V, 500; 584.

[49] Lida Parce, "The Examiner's Glass," Progressive Woman, V (January, 1912), 11.

[50] "A Million and a Half Women Vote," Progressive Woman, VI (September, 1912), 3; May Wood Simons, "Roosevelt and the Woman Suffrage Plank," ibid., 6.

[51] Will R. Shier, "Should Socialists Agitate for Woman Suffrage," Progressive Woman, V (November, 1911), 15.

[52] New York Call, November 5, 1910, p. 6. The state Secretary of State was a non-policy making position, responsible for maintaining legislative records.

[53] "Socialist Woman Runs for Congress," New York Call, July 4, 1910, p. 3.

[54] "Elect Mrs. Berger, Socialist, Head of Milwaukee Schools," American Socialist, July 17, 1915, p. 1.

[55] Anna A. Maley, "That Washington State Campaign," Progressive Woman, VI (January, 1913), 6.

[56] F. M. Witherspoon, "Woman Suffrage: No Longer a Side Issue," New York Call, November 21, 1914, p. 6.

[57] "Hebe," [pseud., Meta L. Stern], "Woman, the Toiler," Socialist Woman, I (February, 1908), 8.

[58] See: June Sochen, The New Woman in Greenwich Village, 1910-1920 (New York, 1972), pp. 47-48 for an account of Henrietta Rodman and Feminist Alliance.

[59] Henrietta Rodman, "What All Women Must Demand if They Want Equal Opportunities," New York Sunday Call, February 28, 1915, p. 7.

[60] Bessy Fiset, "The Woman," Socialist (Seattle), September 8, 1909, p. 1.

[61] Mina Eskenazi, "A Mother's Opinion on Preparedness," New York Sunday Call (magazine section), December 19, 1915, p. 6.

[62] "Women Renew Fight for Vote," New York Call, November 21, 1915, p. 2.

[63] "Benson Tells Women Socialist Stand on Suffrage Question," American Socialist, June 17, 1916, p. 1.

[64] "Big Fight for Suffrage in Four Eastern States," American Socialist, August 7, 1915, p. 3.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion: "A Cuckoo's Egg in the Nest of Socialism"*

"This is the age of woman," the first issue of the Socialist Woman proclaimed, "and that movement which does not make an appeal to womankind is bound to suffer confusion and possible defeat at the moment when success would seem imminent."[1] Those words, written in 1907 as the Socialist Party was about to embark on its experiment with the woman question, proved almost a prophecy. Eight years later the project was unceremoniously discontinued. The Socialist Party in the United States did not collapse because of its response to the woman question. But the outcome of its attempts to integrate the woman movement into the Socialist Party is symbolic of the character of American socialism and suggests that recent historical interpretations have misrepresented the party's radicalism.

The woman question was the most important social issue the party faced during its first two decades of political activity. As more and more women voted and entered the work force, the ideal American woman, "the womanly woman," seemed to be fast disappearing.

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*"Feminism has never been more than a cuckoo's egg in the nest of socialism," wrote Belfort Bax in an article condemning the idea that socialism "necessarily included feminism in some shape or form." The inequalities against which feminists protested were due, Bax thought, to biological differences, and socialism concerned social relationships only. Therefore, socialism had nothing to offer the feminists. E. Belfort Bax, "Socialism and the Feminist Movement," New Review, II (May, 1914), 285-287.

Although American socialism may have had a radical prescription for the Progressive era's economic ailments, it can be concluded that the party took a conservative position on the woman question. It shared with the social scientists of the period an ambivalent view of woman's nature. Although not wanting to fully admit that woman's nature unequivocably separated her from the world of man, the party was unwilling to relinquish the idea of separate roles for women (and men). As a result it had no desire to challenge the social values of American life. Far from being in the "vanguard of all progressive movements," American socialism by the second decade of party activity, was overshadowed by American feminism. Radical feminists had developed an ideology which believed in the Cooperative Commonwealth, but they expected the new society to shun divisions based on sex as well as those based on class. To the feminists, both aspects were worth working for in the present; one was not contingent upon the other.

Since the equality of all individuals was a fundamental socialist principle, the Socialist Party was virtually forced to attempt to solve the woman question. Beginning with Laurence Gronlund in the 1880's the socialist answer was one test of the desirability of the Cooperative Commonwealth. To construct a response to the woman question, socialist ideology translated the problem into economic terms. Just as the working class was oppressed because it was economically dependent on the capitalists, women were denied equal opportunities because in the family relationship they were economically dependent on men. Since the family was the prototype of capitalist society, woman's oppression was the same as that of the working class. However, the socialist solution -- the economic independence of woman -- did not involve the alteration of the institution of her oppression.[2]

The Socialist Party accepted the family as the basic unit of society. Consequently, it accepted as natural the socially-defined role of women in the family. Woman as mother was the one aspect of the woman question which defied a socialist solution. Motherhood meant more to socialists than a mere biological function; it was thought to be the most important occupation a woman could pursue. The cultural values of Progressive society stereotyped woman as mother, and made it impossible for socialists to perceive of an equality for woman which would include changes to her image as mother. The problem has yet to be solved; it still remains culturally impossible to divorce the woman from motherhood, in the same manner that man had been separated from fatherhood. When socialists (or most Americans in the Progressive era) thought of equality for women they envisioned her new status within a society in which the traditional role of man as the family's representative to the world was maintained. If woman was to achieve equality, it would be done without altering the dominant status of man (an impossible feat), or without changing her role as mother.

While feminists espoused motherhood without marriage, or sought family relationships which challenged the traditional nuclear family, socialists wanted to protect and perfect the institution of the family. "The sanest of feminists do not wish to storm the citadel of the family," socialists cautioned. "In fact they intend to reinforce it."[3] The party was unable to accept the feminist critique of the family. Charlotte Perkins Gilman had seen the necessity of redefining "home" and "family" by socializing their functions, but socialists could not expand their socialization of the economy to encompass the individualism inherent in their view of the family.

Because of their conservative view of the nature of woman, the party's commitment to the equality of women was not without its shortcomings. Since the party could not decide what it meant by equality, it was impossible to agree on how this undefined equality would be attained. Of course, women would be equal in the Cooperative Commonwealth, because they would be economically independent, but equality in the contemporary situation was inconceivable. Economic independence, the sole means socialists saw to attain equality, had a different meaning for feminists than for socialists. For feminists it implied independence from one man, and could be achieved immediately. For socialists, it had to be seen in the context of a socialist economy. Workingwomen were economically independent, but socialists objected to the consequences of a female labor force. The capitalist system denied women the right to be "womanly" while they worked. Therefore, socialist equality would only be possible in the Cooperative Commonwealth, when working conditions would not detract from the image of woman. It was simply a question of priorities for the present. Socialists, for a number of reasons, were willing to postpone the liberation of women:

because they were trade unionists and feared the competition of women workers, or because they believed in the myth of motherhood and the inherent rightness of the family.

As far as the Socialist Party was committed to equality for women it was to the idea of equality, not to the actuality.[4] Economic self-reliance was the solution to the woman question, but organizing women into trade unions was not actively pursued. The idea of increasing the number of women who belonged to the Socialist Party was readily accepted, and the Woman's National Committee was created to direct the appeal. But when the party was asked to change its approach to deal with women, the accommodating spirit changed to a negative response. Likewise, the idea of political equality found ready acceptance with most socialists. However, the party was reluctant to play a role in the actual process of winning the ballot for women. Equality for women always lay in the future; each aspect was made contingent on a socialist victory. The Socialist Party was unable to reconcile its ideals with the changes necessary to put them into action.

Shortly after the defeat of the Woman's National Committee a letter to the editor of the "Woman's Sphere" of the New York Call expressed the quandary of socialist women. "The question is, "the writer asked, "is it a good thing for Socialist women to take an active part in affairs that are not really Socialist propaganda?" The writer noted that she had taken up the defense of Margaret Sanger whose espousal of the fight of all women to birth control information had aroused the ire of Anthony Comstock. "But," the writer continued, "an active Socialist woman said to me: That is no work for Socialist women. Let the other women do that. There are few enough Socialist women doing real Socialist work. The only work for Socialist women is to get people to believe in Socialism. She has no right to be side-tracked on those other questions."[5] The letter raised an important question about the Socialist Party. Its writer wanted to know the meaning of socialism; was the Socialist Party to be untouched by the social questions than facing Americans? It was more than a question of the party's position on social issues; it wanted an answer in terms of individual activity.

In 1910, the party congress rejected group participation in other reform movements. A Socialist Party local could not affiliate with the National American Woman Suffrage Association. However, the decision did not prohibit individual socialists from participating in reform movements only tangentially socialistic. In the years between 1910 and 1915 the party reevaluated its position. Socialism had a more concrete, and more limited meaning in 1915 than it had five years earlier. The Call printed replies to the letter's question, and the answers suggest that some women continued to see socialism as an active reform force. For these comrades, the birth control fight or the Anti-Enlistment League were the embodiment of the socialist spirit. By 1915, however, the majority of the members had a different conception of socialism, one which restricted an individual to party activity.

The Socialist Party did not realize the implications of its decision to create a special department for women, or to engage in an "active campaign" for woman suffrage. It had recognized women as a minority with unique problems, and it was committed to organizing all women as members of the minority, regardless of class. The socialist theory applied to all women. Not only the working-class woman was economically dependent; so was that member of the "bridge-whist brigade." But the Socialist Party's conception of itself as the political representative, not of all oppressed individuals, but only of the working class, limited its ability to appeal to women as a group. This was the outcome of the 1910 debate over woman suffrage. "It is too easy to separate ourselves from the community," Mila Tupper Maynard admonished the delegates.[6] It is ironic that the Socialist Party just as it began to produce electoral victories, should resort to such a narrow view of its constituency.

By 1915, the Socialist Party had a static view of society. The proposals by the WNC in the fight for its life suggest that the party was being asked to become a composite of groups which were otherwise powerless, but a composite in which no particular interest monopolized the party's resources. Instead, the party concluded that the working class was the only active force in society. As a result, American socialism was unable to react positively to new forces just beginning to emerge. Because of its interpretation of the woman question, seeing oppression solely in economic terms, the party divided women as a group to fit the larger (working class) whole. Special handicaps which affected all women were important only if the whole working class benefitted by their removal. When socialist women tried to refashion the party along lines more favorable to an acceptance of women as a group, the party withdrew farther, and denied the existence of a separate woman question.

The Socialist Party was not a political success; because it failed to gain a position of power from which its ideas could be implemented, the historian is left with only the rhetoric and few substantiating actions. While rhetoric is often consistent with attitudes, the socialist rhetoric of woman's rights is a mask for the conflict of beliefs and values that shaped party policy.[7] From the rhetoric it is possible to designate three of the beliefs held by socialists as a group, which, over time, proved to be irreconcilable: the socialist desire for equality for women; the party's view of "woman's nature," and its desire to create a socialist state. When the party thought that the nature of woman threatened the success of the Cooperative Commonwealth, the equality of woman was easily sacrificed. American socialism in the Progressive era acted to preserve its identity as the political expression of the working class in its struggle with the capitalists, and in doing so lost touch with the movement for woman's rights. If considered in light of its response to the woman question, the Socialist Party emerges not as a broad-based political movement but a rather narrow group whose aims were limited to one section of society.

In the 1950's American historians began to critically analyze American socialism including its most successful movement, the Socialist Party of America. Originally dismissed as too radical to belong to the liberal traditions of American society, the Socialist Party gained favor when historians of the 1960's initiated a reevaluation of the American past. These "New Left" historians were united by a common desire to locate in American history the roots of an American radicalism which was once again appearing as protest movements for social reform. Although most historians view the Socialist Party as a legitimate political party, the "New Left" has become the party's defender.[8] The original historical interpretations of American socialism attempted to show the party's inability to adapt the socialist philosophy to the American situation. The "New Left" has tried to show that socialism grew out of the American experience; its failure is not seen as the result of its unacceptability to the American tradition, but due to internal disputes which enveloped it after the First World War. Prior to World War I, however, the Socialist Party is portrayed as a movement which appealed to a cross-section of American society, and possessed an ideological unity lacking in contemporary social movements.[9] It is suggested by the "New Left's" interpretation that the Socialist Party was able to unite under one banner a variety of oppressed "special interest" groups, showing them that "...all groups were interdependent: cooperation not competition was the keynote to both individual and collective success."[10]

The "New Left" scholarship, in its haste to prove cooperation, deals quite unsatisfactorily with the only "special interest" group to which the party made a direct appeal. In one instance, it is thought necessary to point out the party's attitude towards Negroes, immigrants, farmers, and young intellectuals, but not to women, although the woman movement was the only group to receive any special recognition.[11] The party undertook a separate program only in the case of women, and an analysis of its relationship to the woman movement would seem to suggest that the cooperation was one-sided.

The one attempt by a "New Left" historian to integrate the woman question into an interpretation of American socialism has, in addition to misrepresenting party activities, also misunderstood the party's system of values.[12] As proof of increasing party activity after 1912, and its spirit of cooperation with minority groups, the membership of women in the party, the creation of the Woman's National Committee in 1908 and the founding of the journal, the Socialist Woman, in 1907 are examined. But the Socialist Woman ceased publication in 1914, because the party executive committee refused to come to the aid of the journal's financial plight, a procedure used to keep alive other socialist papers, notably the New York Call.[13] The Woman's National Committee was abolished in 1915, a fact not mentioned in this analysis. For at least this "special interest" group, the party did not choose to increase its support after 1912. More significant is the party's inability to fully support the women throughout the life of the WNC. This interpretation has mistaken rhetoric for attitude and concluded that participation by women is proof of belief in equality and desire to alter social relationships. On the contrary, the Socialist Party's explanation of the woman question and its attitudes towards the character and capabilities of women prevented it from taking full advantage of even the meagre advances toward the woman movement which it did attempt.

The Socialist Party's response to the woman question suggests that American socialism of the Progressive era is not the radical tradition for which recent historians have been searching. The social values that it proposed for the Cooperative Commonwealth differed little from the social standards set by its capitalist opposition. Socialists only wanted to extend them, to make it possible for workingmen to have wives who were "ladies."

The period after 1912 appears to have been one of consolidation for American socialists. The party withdrew from its "broad base" of appeal into a rather narrow conception of its constituency and its goals. It is true that feminists continued to support the Socialist Party during these years. But it is equally clear that socialists was never committed to feminist goals. The Socialist Party was intellectually incapable of assimilating the woman movement into its coalition.

NOTES: CHAPTER V

[1] "Notes," Socialist Woman, I (June, 1907), 5.

[2] William L. O'Neill (Everyone Was Brave; the Rise and Fall of Feminism in America [Chicago, 1969], pp. 44-45) has recently suggested that feminism failed in the United States because it did not choose to work for institutional changes which would allow for equality. THe route chosen, to concentrate on changing attitudes and values, was unsuccessful. O'Neill believes that by supporting the Socialist Party's efforts, the feminists could have achieved the necessary institutional changes. He offers as evidence the relative equality achieved by women in Scandinavian countries with socialist states. O'Neill's conclusions, however, bear no resemblance to the American Socialist Party's response to the woman question. American socialism offered no challenge to the social institutions of marriage and family, nor to the social roles assumed by men and women.

[3] David Rosenstein, "The Feminist Advance," New York Sunday Call (magazine section), April 25, 1915, p. 10.

[4] This idea was first expressed in an article by Mari Jo Buhle, "Women and the Socialist Party, 1901-1914," (reprinted in Edith H. Altbach (ed.), From Feminism to Liberation [Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971], pp. 65-86). Buhle states in her conclusion, ""As a group, the socialists would more than any other sector of the nation's population affirm the ultimate equality of women and the viciousness of their exploitation under capitalism.... But even the advanced sectors, to say nothing of the Party as a whole, rejected any notion of a special struggle for women...."" (p. 85) Buhle is wrong in concluding that the Woman's National Committee was discontinued because it failed to meet party expectations. In fact, its negligible results fitted quite well with the party's view of women.

[5] "Letter to the Editor of the Woman's Sphere," New York Sunday Call (magazine section), February 6, 1916, p. 11. See this column in succeeding Sundays for the replies.

[6] Socialist Party, Proceedings of the First National Congress of the Socialist Party of the United States (Chicago, 1910), p. 196.

[7] Attitudes are the explanations of one's actions; they dictate whether a positive or negative response is indicated for a particular person or situation. Values, on the other hand, are ethical standards; they express what one knows should be done. The building blocks of both attitudes and values are beliefs. Beliefs are ordered in a

hierarchy, the beliefs closest to one's identity are those to which one most strongly adheres, and in times of stress, these are the beliefs which dictate one's attitudes. (See Milton Rokeach, Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values; a Theory of Organization and Change [San Francisco, 1970], chaps. i, v, vi, vii.) The importance of a belief can be adjudged only in terms of an individuals' actual response to a situation. In the case of the socialists, the relatively low status of the party's belief in equality for women can be seen from its reaction to the Woman's National Committee and to the feminists.

[8] Acceptance of the Socialist Party as a legitimate political party began with the publication of David Shannon's history of the Socialist movement, The Socialist Party of American; a History (Chicago, 1955). Prior to Shannon's study Daniel Bell's book, Marxian Socialism in the United States (Princeton, 1952), considered the Socialist Party little more than a sect of fanatics, too utopian (and too radical) to be successful on the American political scene. The other major study of the 1950's Ira Kipnis' The Socialist Movement in America, 1897-1912 (New York, 1952) found the Socialist Party to be too conscious of its political role. Kipnis' interpretation attributes the party's failure to the desire of its more moderate members to be successful politicians. In the course of their machinations the party lost its radical nature, and so failed to achieve a socialist victory.

[9] James Weinstein, The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925 (New York, 1967), p. 71.

[10] H. Wayne Morgan (ed.), American Socialism, 1900-1960 (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1964), p. 71.

[11] Ibid., pp. 71-92.

[12] Weinstein, The Decline of Socialism, p. 58.

[13] Josephine Conger-Kaneko, "A Party-Owned Press; Being the Story of This Journal and Why It Is Not Party-Owned," The Coming Nation, I (July, 1914), 4-6. (This was the last issue of what had formerly been the Socialist Woman.)

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